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# THE LAY READER,

A SERIES OF  
THE  
UNION  
OF  
Sermons for the Christian Year,

BY

JOHN N. NORTON,

ASSOCIATE RECTOR OF CHRIST CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY., AUTHOR OF "SHORT SERMONS,"  
"LIVES OF BISHOPS," ETC.

*Second Edition.*

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YOUNG MEN  
TO  
YOUNG COACHES

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## PREFACE.

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IN 1860, when the writer published a small volume of "Short Sermons," the work which he hoped it might accomplish was to serve as a *Souvenir* for the members of his Confirmation classes, and to strengthen their attachment for the Church.

The general favor which the book met with was as gratifying as it was unlooked for, and not a few have been the testimonies that good has been done by it.

While the *sixth* edition was in preparation for the press, the idea was suggested that another series of the same plain, practical character, but following more closely the order of the Christian Year, and hence, better adapted for Lay Readers, might be useful.

The incessant "wear and tear" of pastoral work have left no hours of leisure for the accumulation of a "barrel" of well-digested, polished Sermons, upon which to draw, and the discourses preached during the twelve months past, make up the principal staple of this volume. There is not the slightest danger that the fantastic capitals of showy advertisements will parade them before the public eye, under the attractive title of "*Great Sermons*," but the sole purpose of their publication will be answered, if they shall convey wholesome instruction to some minds, or warmth and comfort to some hearts, which other influences might fail to reach.

MAY, 1870.



"It must be serious preaching that makes men serious."—*Baxter*.

"I would have every minister of the Gospel address his hearers with the zeal of a friend, with the general energy of a father, and with the exuberant affection of a mother."—*Fenelon*.

"It takes all our learning to make things plain."—*Usher*.

"Seek for such things as would be likely to *strike* and *stick*."—*William Jay*.

"He best deserves to be heard, who uses speech only to clothe his thoughts, and his thoughts only to promote truth and virtue."—*Massillon*.

"To preach practical sermons, as they are called, that is, sermons upon virtues and vices, without inculcating those great Scriptural truths of redemption, grace, &c., which alone can incite and enable us to foresake sin and follow righteousness,—what is it but to put together the wheels, and set the hands of a watch, forgetting the spring, which is to make them all go?"—*Bishop Horne*.

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# SERMON I.

## WAITING FOR THE SAVIOUR'S COMING.

[FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.]

---

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for HIM, and HE will save us.—ISAIAH XXV. *part of 6th verse.*

---

THERE is only one thing of which we are really certain, as to the future, and that is, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST will soon come, with power and great glory to be our Judge.

We sometimes speak of death as inevitable, and yet we *might* escape;—because for aught we know, the end of the world may be near at hand, and we may be of the number of those who shall be alive when the trumpet of the second advent shall sound, and “caught up to meet the Lord in the air.” [I Thes. 4-17].

It cannot be denied, that the wars and rumours of wars, the earthquakes, pestilences, and the perplexity and distress of nations, are so many significant signs, mentioned by the SAVIOUR HIMSELF, as tokens of His approach to judgment.

Can any one of us say, on the return of the advent season, to-day, that we are waiting and ready for His appearing?

There will be those, and that, too, a vast multitude, who instead of being terrified by the great sound of the trumpet, and by the sight of the throne of the Eternal JUDGE, with its wheels of burning fire, shall lift up their voices, in the language of exultation and joy: "LO, THIS IS OUR LORD; WE HAVE WAITED FOR HIM, AND HE WILL SAVE US!"

Oh, my soul, will this be thy portion?

The Jewish people had long been waiting for the coming of the MESSIAH, as ONE who should set right their many wrongs, and prove HIMSELF to be the consolation of Israel." [St. Luke ii. 25.]

Not only did the shepherds of Bethlehem rejoice, when the angels brought the glad tidings of HIS birth, but many, like old Simeon, felt themselves ready to "depart in peace," when their glistening eyes had actually seen the salvation of GOD.

The events of the first Advent are passed, and believers in all lands, are waiting for "the glorious appearing of the great GOD, and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST" [Titus ii. 13] when HE, who once came to visit the world in great humility, shall appear once more as the KING of KINGS, and the JUDGE of quick and dead.

We are all of us this day within reach of salvation; but, alas, how few could say with truth, that we have made our calling and election sure. What a small number have done all that they *might* and *could*, in order that they may meet the LORD in peace.

If pushed hard to make a frank confession, how many, who are almost within a step of their graves,

will be forced to acknowledge, that *every thing* yet remains undone, so far as their readiness to give in their account to GOD, is concerned.

The man of business who goes with hurried step to the bank, just in time to hear the ponderous key turning the wards which are to shut him out ; and the traveller who reaches the depot a moment after the train has left, experiences disappointment, but such disappointment is as nothing, compared with the dismay which will overwhelm the neglecter of GOD's grace and mercy, who is now devoting himself, soul and body, to the interests of this world, and who allows himself no adequate time, in which to provide for his well-being in the next !

When Antipater, king of Macedon, was presented with a book which treated of happiness, he declined it, saying, " I am not at leisure."

O my friends, what can I say to those of you who have the book of all books in your possession, which discloses to all who study it aright, the secret of happiness ; happiness in both worlds, but who are making the same excuse for its neglect as this thoughtless king ?

You have time for the accumulation of money, time for pleasure, time for idle and unprofitable discourse,—but none for the great work of your soul's salvation.

"Not yet," is the apology of the youth, who is carried away by the temptations which beset his path, when urged not to forget the one thing needful.

"Not yet," the young man insists, who is busy with his studies, or engrossed by the cares of business.

"Not yet," says the head of the household, swallowed up in the whirlpool of every-day affairs, and toiling for the meat that perishes.

"Not yet," exclaims the gray-headed sinner, almost angry with the friend who seeks to remind him, in the gentlest and most unobtrusive way, of the near approach of the judgment. Alas! it makes the soul sick to witness, daily and hourly, this unvarying repetition of the old story of opportunities for good thrown away and everlasting salvation lost.

At the critical moment of that night, in 1741, when Count Lessoch went to conduct the Princess Elizabeth of Russia to the palace, to assert her right to the vacant throne, he found her irresolute, and little disposed to go. He instantly drew forth two pictures, which he had caused to be prepared, and placed them before her.

In one, she saw herself undergoing the sufferings of the tortures, and the count on a scaffold; in the other, she was arrayed in royal attire, and ascending the throne, amidst the rapturous applause of the people.

He bade her choose her portion. She preferred the throne to the scaffold, and on the morrow was Empress of Russia.

And so, my irresolute hearers, would I hold up before you, this day, two pictures, in one or the other of which you must ere long appear. You will either be found amongst the affrighted throng who will turn

pale at the sound of the trumpet, which heralds the near approach of the JUDGE, and call upon the rocks and mountains to hide you from HIS sight; or it will be your blessed privilege to welcome HIM in the exulting language of the text, "*Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us?*"

Can you hesitate, a moment, which condition you would prefer? Perchance, the return of Advent, and the note of warning heard in the solemn services of the day, may have led some one now present, to say within himself, "O, that I might make my peace with GOD, and be prepared for the coming of the JUDGE!" The words may be ready to be spoken, if the fitting opportunity were afforded, "How am I to do this?"

I answer, repent, truly and heartily, for your past sins; have a lively and steadfast faith in CHRIST our SAVIOUR; seek HIM in the ways of HIS own appointment; and endeavour, henceforth, by the help of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this evil world.

Here you have the statement of the whole matter in a single sentence. The faithful preaching of the Gospel is merely an expansion and enforcement of these few points.

Hundreds and thousands, quite as weak and imperfect as you know yourself to be, have thus *sought* and *found*, peace for their souls. And why will you not seek it also? O, my brother, be not content to be spoken of, after the fitful dream of life is ended, merely as "a kind neighbour," or "a good father," or as one "lamented by a large circle of friends."

Such statements in a fulsome obituary, or in the inscription on the tomb-stone, will afford no comfort, and, if the sins of your youth, and the misdoings of riper years have not been heartily repented of; if your hatreds, and variances, and profanenesses, and impurities have been left to fester within the soul,—better, far better for you, had you never been born. The poor, lost soul, separated from the body, and ushered, naked, and trembling into the presence of HIM who judgeth righteously, will shrink with horror, from the contemplation of the unprofitable and sinful life which is past, and at the deepening gloom which settles down upon the untried future. And, all this, my hearers, when the SON of GOD died to redeem you, and to open for you the gate of everlasting life!

The lessons of the Advent season are designed not only for such as are dead in trespasses and sins, and who are making no preparation for the judgment, but for us, also, who claim to be the followers of CHRIST.

It is certainly a great comfort for the believer to be able to say, when reminded of the dangers which compass him about, "In the LORD put I my trust; I will not fear what men, or demons can do unto me."

He should, however, be able to add, that poor and imperfect as he is, he is trying, day by day, to glorify GOD, in his body and in his spirit, which are GOD'S.

It is related of Gnidius, a skilful Architect, who built a watch-tower for the king of Egypt, to warn mariners against certain dangerous rocks, that he caused his own name to be engraved on a stone in the wall, and having covered it with a thin coat of plaster,

he inscribed the monarch's on the outside, in golden letters, as though the work had been for his master's glory.

The Architect was cunning enough to know that the moisture of the waves, and the crumbling touch of time, would soon remove the coat of plastering, and leave his own name on the enduring marble, to be handed down to after ages.

Let none of us, while professing to honor GOD, and to seek HIS glory, be really ministering to our own self-love, and our inborn pride of heart.

*"Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him,"* waited as those who looked for HIS speedy coming; waited as those who remembered that this world was not their home; waited as those who must give an account to the Eternal JUDGE, for the use which has been made of the talents of time, of wealth, and of influence.

The call on Advent Sunday, for the replenishment of the LORD'S treasury, that the great work of Missions for the evangelizing of the world, may not be hindered, puts to the test our claims to discipleship, and our acknowledgment in words, that we are stewards only of GOD'S treasures, and that it is never safe in stewards to withhold from the Lord HIS ample dues.

Advent comes towards the close of the year, when prudent men are wont to count up their losses and their gains, and to see how they stand with the world.

A dramatic scene might be sketched from real life,



in many a Christian household, which should cause the ears to tingle.

The husband has gone through with a careful enumeration of the family expenses, and he shakes his head, and looks grave, almost severe. He calls the attention of his wife to the several items, the cost of keeping up the house, tailor's and milliner's bills, schooling of the children, music and dancing lessons, hire of servants, trip to the sea-side, &c. &c.

"Too much! too much!" the frugal business man exclaims; "we must retrench somewhere."

"Our position in society," meekly suggests the wife, "requires of us to keep up a certain style of living,"

"True! true!" says the Christian householder, "we cannot curtail in that respect; but I am afraid we are expending too large a sum for church purposes."

The good wife knows he is wrong in this, but for reasons of her own, she holds her peace.

"Let me see!" our liberal christian continues, encouraged by her silence; "my yearly contribution to the church is forty dollars; I give at least twenty more for missions, and for other like purposes, and reckoning up the ten cents and quarters which we put into the plate, I have no doubt we are paying a hundred dollars during the twelve months."

I drop the curtain here. I have no disposition to question the accuracy of the estimate. This Christian man, with an income of two, three, four, ten thousand dollars, silences the upbraidings of conscience by the

munificent gift of one hundred a year to the everlasting KINGDOM of GOD.

It may be laid down as a foregone conclusion, that none of the professed followers of the LORD JESUS, who thus deliberately rob their heavenly MASTER, will have the assurance to exclaim, as in the text, when HE comes to call them to account, "*Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us!*"

## SERMON II.

### THE CHARACTER OF THOSE WHO DERIVE PROFIT FROM GOD'S WORD.

[SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.]

---

Do not My words do good to him that walketh uprightly?—MICAH,  
ii.

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A JESUIT preacher in the strand, was once bewailing the barrenness of England in religious privileges.

"Some countries" he said "have the bone of one Saint, some the relic of another, but here there is nothing, no vestige of the blessed Saints."

"Ah!" exclaimed a passer-by, who overheard the saying, "but we have the best relics of the Saints which we could possibly desire. We have the first promise which ever cheered man's heart,—the promise of a SAVIOUR,—even if we have no relic of the man to whom it was given."

If we have not a fragment of the harp of David, we have the sweet sounds which David's harp gave forth. If we have not a portion of the thorn which tried St. Paul, we have the comfort he received, "My grace is sufficient for thee." We have the arrow that first

pierced him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME?" and the balm which healed him, "*I am JESUS!*"

Precious and priceless, however, as is the treasure which GOD has given us in the Bible, it is wrong and dangerous to cherish the superstitious notion, that the mere mechanical reading of it, will accomplish wonders for our souls. One may hold the title-deeds of a valuable estate, but unless it be properly cultivated, he may actually die for the want of food.

As a person may read the figure on the dial, but cannot tell the time of day, unless the sun shine upon it, so may the Holy Scriptures be read with our bodily eyes, yet shall we pour over them to no purpose, until the SPIRIT of GOD shine into our hearts.

Although the design of the Bible is to instruct and to profit, it may be so perverted and abused, as not only to be of no service, but an actual disadvantage to those who possess it. Such is the truth brought out so distinctly in the text: "*Do not MY words do good to him that walketh uprightly?*" Two points must here be noticed:—*First*, the character of those who desire profit from GOD's word; and, *secondly*, the good which it does them.

It will need no reasoning to prove that the Holy Scriptures cannot act upon us as physical causes operate in the body, without our giving the least thought to them. They can only affect us morally, by suggesting right motives, and thus guiding and governing our minds and hearts.

Who, then, may expect to derive profit from GOD's word?

I answer, 1st, *the unprejudiced and well-disposed.*

A person shut up in a darkened room, and cut off from all intercourse with others by bolts and bars, would not be more completely left in deepening gloom, than the unfortunate slave of prejudice, who indulges himself in the pleasing delusion that he is always right, and that all who differ from him must, of necessity, be wrong.

It was prejudice which caused the Athenians to condemn the just Aristides, although they had never seen him, and which made the poor bigot so industriously carry his arms full of faggots to heap upon the funeral pile of John Huss, without the slightest idea what Huss' religious opinions were.

Even so it is utterly impossible for one to be made better by reading the Bible, who first forms a set of notions for himself, and turns over the sacred page with the single purpose of finding passages which will help to bolster up these favorite views.

2d. Another characteristic mark of those who receive benefit from the Bible is *diligence*.

Our Blessed LORD's command that we shall "*Search the Scriptures*" [St. John v : 39], establishes this point; and St. Luke's commendation of the disciples of Berea, who "*Searched the Scriptures daily*" [Acts xvii : 11], should serve as an incentive to ourselves.

The Bible is not a book for the slothful. It may well be compared to a "field, upon the surface of which, if sometimes we gather manna easily and without labor, and given, as is were, freely to our hands, yet of which also, many portions are to be cultivated with pains

and toil, ere they will yield food for the use of man. This bread of life also is to be often eaten in the wholesome sweat of our brow."\*

3d. Again, it will be to little purpose that we own a copy of the Bible, or even read it, unless we bring to the study of it, *humbleness of mind*.

Lord Bacon says of the difficulties of Holy Scripture, "If they teach us nothing else, they teach us our own blindness."

Surely, no lesson is more important for us to learn.

"The eyes of our understanding" must be "enlightened," by the HOLY SPIRIT, before we can rightly appreciate GOD's blessed word. We must humble ourselves, and ask HIM to be our Teacher, or we shall forever remain in darkness and doubt.

"The things which are hid from the wise and prudent," will be fully revealed unto us, when we have made the royal psalmist's prayer our own: "Open THOU mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of THY law!" [Ps. cix: 18].

4th. Once more. If we would be made better by the reading of Holy Scripture, *we must prove ourselves GOD's obedient children*.

"If any man will do GOD's will," says our Blessed LORD, "he shall know of the doctrine" [St. John vii: 17].

Instead of the favorite theory of these days, that increased knowledge will bring with it growth in godliness, the Bible reverses the process. To love and

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\* Archbishop Trench.

obey GOD is set forth as the secret of our being led to the saving knowledge of HIM. "Understanding," writes St. Augustine, "is the reward of Faith. Seek not to know, in order that thou mayest believe; but seek to believe in order that thou mayest know."

Supposing, now, that we are so fortunate as to possess these four requisites for the profitable study of GOD's word,—*what special benefits may we expect to derive from it?* This is the second division of the subject.

We are assured, in the text, in general terms, that the study of GOD's word will do us good. This implies,—

1st. That the Scriptures will benefit us in the way of *information*.

It is not good for the soul to be without knowledge, and the knowledge which it can least afford to dispense with, is that which is contained in the Bible.

We require no stronger proof of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures than the simple fact that all sorts and conditions of men, the rude and the refined, the ignorant and the enlightened, find that the Bible is the very text-book which they need, to make them "wise unto salvation."

As Queen Elizabeth rode through London, on her way from the Tower to be crowned at Westminster Abbey, at one stage of her royal progress, a beautiful boy, designed to represent Truth, was let down from a triumphal arch, and presented her with a copy of the Bible. Her majesty kissed the book, and hugged it to her breast, declaring it to be the most precious gift which she could possibly have received.

It is the same inestimable treasure, which so many of us claim to value, but which is so often treated with such unpardonable neglect.

2d. Another advantage to be derived from the Bible is in the way of *timely and well-deserved rebuke*.

When we have grown cold and formal in our religion, and when our souls cleave to the very dust, through the power of besetting sins, the Holy Scriptures which never flatter nor deceive, will speak out plainly, and with an emphasis which cannot fail to arouse us from our false security and peril.

“My trusty counsellors they are,  
And friendly warnings give;  
Divine rewards attend on those  
Who by Thy precepts live.”

3d. Again. They who bring the requisite preparation of mind and heart to the study of the Bible, *will find comfort in it*. Here, the sick and suffering receive the solace which they need; and the poor penitent is cheered by the assurance of forgiveness. The blessed word of GOD furnishes daily food for every believing soul; teaches us our duty under all the changes and chances of this mortal state, and whispers hope and consolation to the departing. “Newton laid not his dying head on his ‘Principia,’ but on his Bible: Cowper not on his ‘Task,’ but on his Testament; Michael Angelo not on that pencil which alone coped with the grandeur of the ‘Judgment,’ but on that grace which for him robbed the judgment of its terrors.”



4th. Another important purpose of the Holy Scriptures is to *sanctify us*. The instructions, warnings, and comforts contained in GOD's word, lead us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of GOD" [2d Cor. vii: 1]. The constant and steady aim of every one of us should be to become more perfect in our purposes and plans; more perfect in heart and emotion; more perfect in our submission to GOD's will, and in our conformity to His image. All this the Bible will help us to accomplish.

5th. Once more. The Holy Scriptures are of inestimable value to us because *they aid us in the great work of our salvation*.

"By this Gospel *ye are saved*," writes St. Paul to the Corinthians [1 Cor. xv: 2, 3], "if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you." Unnumbered thousands now in paradise have been guided into the haven of peace, by this unfailing compass; and there is hardly a verse in all this sacred treasury which has not afforded instruction and comfort to the bewildered and the sorrowing; hardly a verse which has not been moistened with tears which have fallen from the eyes of the penitent, or tears of thankful joy from eyes that will be called to weep no more.

"Here the REDEEMER's welcome voice  
Spreads heavenly peace around;  
And life and everlasting joys  
Attend the blissful sound."

And, now, my friends, let us ask ourselves the im-

portant question whether the Bible is doing good to us, in these several ways? Does it instruct, rebuke, and comfort us; and, can we say from our own experience of its worth, that it is helping to sanctify and save us?

Then, of a truth, must we possess, in some degree, at least, the unprejudiced and well-disposed minds; the diligence; the humility; and the spirit of obedience—without which even God's blessed word will remain a dead-letter to us.

HE has not made it like a garden laid out in a formal way, with walks placed at right angles, and the plants, and herbs, and flowers, each arranged in its own peculiar plot,—but rather like the field containing the hidden seeds of good, which it is our part diligently to search after, and to cultivate with unremitting care.

“O may these heavenly pages be

My ever dear delight;

And still new beauties may I see,

And still increasing light!”

Can you pray this prayer? If not,—there must be something wrong with you.

A clever and learned man, who was so unfortunate as to be an infidel, was once travelling in Wales, when he came to a neat cottage, in a lovely spot, and stopped to rest, and to ask for a drink of cool water from the mountain-spring. It was a little girl he spoke to, who sat at the door reading a book. Pleased with the child's sweet, intelligent face, he kindly said, “I see you are getting your lesson, my dear.”

"No sir," she answered, "I am only reading."

"Why, what book interests you so much?"

"The Bible, sir."

"What," said he, half smiling to himself, as he handed her back the cup, "do you like that book, then?"

For a moment, the child was dumb with astonishment, and then raising her bright eyes, she answered, "why, sir, I thought that everybody loved the Bible!"

The gentleman remembered these words a long while after, and they helped to bring him to a knowledge of the truth. He learned to love the Bible; and, I pray God, that all of you may love it also!

## SERMON III.

### CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS.

[THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.]

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We are ambassadors for CHRIST.—CORINTHIANS ii, *part of 20th verse.*

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IT was the work of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, by HIS atoning sacrifice on the Cross, to reconcile GOD to man. That task HE accomplished, once and forever.

The duty of the christian minister is to declare this all-important truth, and to beseech the headstrong and disobedient to become reconciled unto GOD.

Could mortal man possibly be entrusted with a more important, or exalted office? What proud distinction of earth can be at all compared with the power and dignity of those who can lawfully declare "*We are ambassadors for Christ?*"

An ambassador, (according to the ordinary meaning of the term,) is a minister of the highest rank, employed by the prince or state, at the court of another, to manage the concerns of his own prince or state, and representing the dignity and power of his sovereign.

He is sent to do what the prince would do, had he himself been present. At all times, and in all countries, an ambassador is a sacred character, and his person is regarded as inviolable.

The duly authorized minister of the LORD JESUS is His representative, and empowered to do what the MASTER would do, had He come HIMSELF. The ambassador cannot appoint himself, and he must be duly armed with credentials from his sovereign's hand, if he hope to have his message treated with respect.

And so the minister of GOD brings his commission with him; a commission signed and sealed by those who had a right to give it; a commission which will afford undoubted evidence to all, that they may implicitly trust in him as one whom the LORD JESUS HIMSELF has sent.

A sick man, slowly but surely declining to the grave, was much troubled in his conscience. After weeks devoted to the study of the Bible, and to earnest prayer, he still hesitated about the course he ought to take, and could not be persuaded to renounce his painful and wicked doubts, and to cast himself into the open arms of DIVINE compassion.

At last, the ambassador of CHRIST, who had counselled him often and earnestly to no purpose, took up the Holy Book, one day, and read those grand words of the Apostle Paul: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of GOD which is in

CHRIST JESUS our LORD." [Romans, viii: 31], etc. After a pause, the clergyman said to the sick man, "would you like to be thus persuaded?"

A mournful smile played upon his pallid lips, but he gave no word of answer.

"And you *must* be thus persuaded," pursued the minister. It is a dishonour to ALMIGHTY GOD not to believe HIS message. It is time that you should come to a conclusion. I am an ambassador from GOD, commissioned from above, and set apart to this office, as Aaron was to his. I am sent by Divine appointment to your bedside, as surely as GOD sent Philip to the Ethiopian. You have heard my message. Repent, believe, and be baptised.

Now, therefore, advise and see what answer I shall return to HIM that sent me. GOD declares he is reconciled to you; will you agree to be reconciled to HIM?

You do truly repent you of your sins; you do heartily confess your ill desert; you do despair of safety, except in CHRIST; "you are steadfastly purposed to keep HIS laws." Is this your mind and purpose, as GOD knoweth, who reads the heart?

"It is, it is," the penitent replied.

"It remains, then," added the clergyman, "for you to surrender your doubts of GOD's mercy; to accept frankly HIS proffered hand of reconciliation; to give yourself up to HIM in a formal covenant."

The next day, the sick man was baptized, and as the sacred service closed, he said to the clergyman, "My dear friend, I thank you. I seem to know more

of the love of CHRIST that passeth knowledge. Blessed SAVIOUR! not satisfied to bestow pardon on the sinner who asks it: but HE sends me such a message, and such a messenger, that I cannot doubt HIS mercy is for me."

The ambassador of CHRIST had spoken with authority, and had not spoken in vain.

This important functionary must, however, bring something more than his valid commission to act for the higher authority which has sent him. One of the indispensable requisites for his success is *prudence*. Practical knowledge of the world is worth more to him than mere book-learning.

The duties of his embassy will bring him into close contact with all sorts and conditions of men, and his mission will prove a mortifying and miserable failure, unless he be prepared to exercise the wisdom of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove.

CHRIST'S ambassadors must also be distinguished for their *fidelity*. Remembering always that they are sent to do what the MASTER HIMSELF would do, were HE present in HIS own person, they are never at liberty to negotiate on any new terms, but must be careful to explain, urge, and enforce the conditions on which GOD is willing to be reconciled to sinners, as the ALMIGHTY ONE has appointed.

Again—it is reasonably expected of the ambassadors of CHRIST that they shall be *magnanimous*.

"Many mountains are to be climbed in going this embassy," as Archbishop Leighton has sweetly expressed it, "and the rage of many a tempest to be

endured." A general ambassador will always account it far more honorable to suffer the worst things for doing the best service he can to his MASTER, than to enjoy the world's best rewards for the least point of disloyalty.

It may be regarded as a trifling point compared with those already named, but it certainly ought not to be lost sight of, that the *ambassador's statement of his business should be plain and explicit.*

As the best clock in the world will be spoiled, if one is always moving the hands backward and forward, and changing the length of the pendulum, in order to make it keep time with other clocks, so the minister of the Gospel who attempts to accommodate his teachings to the tastes and caprices of the people, can never be respected nor useful.

Clear, transparent language, which serves to convey his message, is infinitely to be preferred to the great swelling words of a florid and uncultivated style.

An English preacher had on one occasion mentioned GOD, several times, in his discourse, by the name of "the Deity," when he was startled by a rough sailor, seated near the pulpit, who rose up suddenly, and exclaimed, "Deity! well, who is He? is He our God-a mighty?"

The attendants were about to turn him out, without ceremony, when the minister who meekly acknowledged to himself the propriety of the rebuke, kindly answered, "Yes, friend, I did mean the ALMIGHTY God."



"I thought so," said the sailor, "but was not quite sure. I never heard that name before."

The ambassador of CHRIST *is not to seek his own honor and glory, but that of the Sovereign, whose representative and mouth piece he is.*

A minister who was too fond of exhibiting his learning, in elaborate and polished essays, with a text of Scripture prefixed as a motto, once found a slip of paper pinned to the pulpit cushion, with a reference written on it,—[St. John xii: 21]. "Sir, we would see JESUS."

His own conscience supplied the application, and he resolved, from that day forward, by GOD'S help, to preach CHRIST. The next Sunday, he disclosed his wise purpose, by choosing for his text, [St. John xx: 20], "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD."

Once more. *The faithful ambassador of CHRIST will persevere in the great work to which GOD has appointed him, so long as health and life hold out.*

John Newton who once carried on the slave-trade without the slightest compunction, and served the devil with a devotion worthy of a better cause, afterwards became as distinguished as a minister of CHRIST, as he had before been noted for his wickedness. For many long years, he labored with great success, in London, and at the age of eighty, when some of his friends would persuade him that the time for rest had come, he answered, "I cannot stop preaching. What! shall the old African blasphemer stop, while he can speak?"

What a rebuke to the easy and the self-indulgent, who make light of their ordination vows; and forget whose servants they are!

On this third Sunday in Advent, the regular order of the Church service brings before the minds of her children, the "high dignity and the weighty office and charge,"\* of the Christian Ministry, and all hearts unite in the earnest prayer, that the "the ministers and stewards of GOD's mysteries," may, by their faithful efforts, "turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," and make them ready for the SAVIOUR'S second coming to judgment. An important thought suggests itself, which I would press upon your careful attention. It will not be very long before the voices of the ambassadors of CHRIST, who are proclaiming HIS message, will be hushed in death, and this ministration of mercy must cease, unless others now set about preparing themselves to occupy the places of those who must soon be summoned to give in their account unto GOD.

The world-wide work of the Gospel calls for every grade and variety of gifts, to fill the offices of the Ministry. The Church not only requires learned clergymen to teach in her Colleges, and Theological Seminaries,—and to minister in regularly organized congregations, but she calls for such as have true zeal and godly-love, to go forth as preachers from house to house, crying aloud in the wilderness, and seeking,

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\* Office for the ordination of a Priest.

with pains-taking care, for the lost in the high-ways, and among the hedges.

Christian parents, ask yourselves, to-day, whether GOD is not calling upon you, loudly, and imperatively, to give up a son of yours to the holy Ministry.

I implore those who are well off in worldly goods, to remember the claims which the LORD has upon them, in the way of life-long devotion to HIS service,—and to provide the means for the training of some promising youth, for the great work of an ambassador for CHRIST. Perhaps, some of you, as you recall the past, are ready to confess that your lives might have been better spent, and that instead of gathering jewels for the MASTER'S crown, your time has been too exclusively devoted to the gain of earthly treasure. It may be too late for you to put on the armor, now, and to go forth as a leader of the host,—but you may even yet send your substitute,—and let him be working in your stead, when you are sleeping in your grave.

By the sacred memories of the Hannahs, and Loises, Eunices, and Monicas, to whom the world owes so much for having trained up Samuels, Timothys, and Augustines, to minister before the LORD, I beseech Christian mothers to be unceasing in their efforts and their prayers, that their sons, also, may become champions of the faith.

Would to GOD that more of the young men whose hearts beat with emotion when they are reminded of the noble deeds of earthly heroes, may be aroused to consecrate themselves to the higher and nobler work

of overturning the strong-holds of sin, and Satan, and of building up the everlasting KINGDOM of God.

The office of CHRIST's ambassador will always require sacrifice and self-denial of him who shall undertake it;—but who can doubt that it will bring with it also an abundant and enduring reward?

## SERMON IV.

### THE STEALTHY STEP OF DEATH.

[FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.]

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There shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left.—ST. LUKE xvii. 34.

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THAT terrible saying of Anne of Austria, to Richelieu, holds good for both mercy and judgment: "My Lord Cardinal, GOD does not pay at the end of every week, but at the last HE pays!" Aye! at the last HE pays, with interest, as many an unpardoned sinner has realized, in the agonies of death.

While Talleyrand lay gasping for breath, Louis Phillippe, the King of France, came in, and inquired, in a gracious tone, "How do you feel?"

"Sire," was the remorseful and terrible response, "Sire, I am suffering the pangs of the damned!"

O, what are our poor, fleeting lives, that we can venture to lose the happiness of eternity, for the sake of spending a few short days in the unsatisfying pleasures of sin? Warnings are daily and hourly sent to remind us that if we have any preparation to make, it must receive our attention speedily. The coffin, the

shroud, the pall, the open grave: what could speak more eloquently than these? The old gray-haired man, immersed in business or politics, retires in full health to his bed, and awakes no more on earth. Mothers are called away, when it seems impossible that their families can dispense with their watchful care. Smiling infancy is nipped in the bud by the cold frost of death. The gay young woman returns from a ball, in her gauzy dress, dreaming of the incense of admiration which has been paid her there:—the seeds of consumption have been sowed by her own imprudence, and she gradually fades away. A lad, full of vivacity, and even in the fullest enjoyment of life, comes back from the bosom of his father's family, after the pleasant Christmas holidays, to resume his studies at school, thinking of everything else but a sudden call to meet his God. With no premonitions, and without any apparent cause, he complains of sickness, and, as it were in a moment, is snatched away.

“Thou joyous youth, hence learn how soon  
Thy years may end their flight:  
Long, long before life's brilliant noon,  
May come death's gloomy night!”

A family of wealth is travelling in foreign lands. For years this trip has been looked forward to, with the most unalloyed satisfaction. The ocean is safely crossed; the gayeties of the French capital are enjoyed; the beauties of Italy and the grandeur of Switzerland, fill them with rapture. But if the all-seeing God be with us everywhere, so does Death con-

stantly dog our path. A beloved child sickens and dies, far off from its native land, and bereaved parents return in sorrow to their once happy home.

These are daguerreotypes of daily life. The shading and colors are accurate and just. It is, therefore, doing no violence to our Saviour's language in the text (although its primary reference was certainly to the destruction of Jerusalem), to consider it as descriptive of such scenes as these: "There shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

1st. Taken from the cares and enjoyment of life. What a bubble! What a vain and empty shadow! William Pitt, a statesman who had once wielded the power of England, died, at a solitary house on Wimbledon Common. A small country inn stood not far off, where those interested in his welfare were accustomed to leave their carriages, when they came to make inquiries concerning him. On a cold, dark morning of January, 1806, a person, having failed to obtain of the landlady the information desired, proceeded to the statesman's house. No one responded to his knock, and on opening the door, all was solitude and silence. He wandered from room to room, and at last reached the bed-chamber of Pitt. The great statesman lay dead, the sole tenant of a mansion before whose entrance obsequious suitors had so often waited to urge their respective claims.

Well may the wise man exclaim, in view of the uncertainty of earthly good, "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the

labor that I had labored to do, and, behold, all was vanity, and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." [Eccles. ii : 11].

No class nor condition of life can claim exemption from the perils and uncertainties of our common lot. Death regards neither the hopes nor the desires of man. With stealthy step he draws near his victim, and prepares the fatal shaft. "There shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other left." Our nearest and dearest friend, the one associated with us in the same engrossing pursuits, may be snatched away from our side, and for a moment we feel a cold shudder creep over us, as if the icy fingers of the destroyer had touched us also.

2d. This sudden summons to quit the scenes and employments of life, puts an end also to all preparation which we may have tried, or intended to make, for a future state of existence. As the tree falls, so must it lie. The fond and foolish conceit in regard to the efficiency of prayers for the dead, is utterly vain. "He that is unjust, must be unjust still; and he that is filthy, must be filthy still." [Rev. xxii : 11]. GOD gives us life, that we may work out our soul's salvation. It must be long enough for this purpose, since HE designed it expressly for it. "I have provided in the course of my life," said the wretched Cæsar Borgia, in his last moments, "I have provided, in the course of my life, for everything except death; and now, alas! I am to die, although wholly unprepared."

Stripped of every disguise, the poor, naked soul,



with nothing to screen it from the searching scrutiny of the Omniscient ONE, must appear before the bar of judgment. "And I saw a great white throne," (says St. John, in the visions of the Apocalypse), "and HIM that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire." [Rev. xx: 11-15].

How small and trifling everything earthly seems, in view of that terrible appearing of the great GOD our SAVIOUR, to be the judge of quick and dead! Verily, the beloved disciple has drawn a picture, which may well cause the boldest to tremble. "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and the rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of HIM that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the

Lamb; for the great day of His wrath is come; and who is able to stand?" [Rev. vi : 14-15].

When the mighty Saladin had subdued Egypt, crossed the Euphrates, and conquered countless cities, mortal sickness overtook him, and he made ready to depart. Calling for the herald who had borne his victorious standard in so many conflicts, he commanded him to fasten the shroud in which he was shortly to be wrapped, to the top of a lance, and, unfurling it in the sight of the multitude, to proclaim with loud voice, "This is all that remains to Saladin the Great, of all his glory." So we, my friends, however exalted or humble our lot, must soon depart hence, deprived of every earthly good, and carrying nothing with us, but the testimony of a good conscience, or the bitter pangs of horror and remorse. And then, what a separation will be made between the good and the bad!

A murderer, with the guilt of a fellow creature's blood upon him, once hurried to a railway station, and jumped upon the passing train, hoping to bury himself amidst the crowds of a neighboring city. He had hardly effected his escape before the dreadful deed was discovered, and suspicion fastened on the guilty man. He was pursued to the depot, and failing to find him there, the officer of justice despatched a telegraphic message in advance of the cars, in order to secure his arrest at the end of the route. Guilty and innocent in a confused mass, were hurrying forth from the station-house, when a constable touched the murderer on the shoulder, saying, in a low, decided tone, "You must go with me!" He was secured with hand-

cuffs, imprisoned, tried, condemned, and hung. A great company of people are in like manner now travelling together to another world; some pardoned, through the mercy of CHRIST JESUS our SAVIOUR, and others, stained with the blood-guiltiness of unrepented sin.

Offenders may hope to escape observation in the crowd, the ungodly husband passing in at the golden gates of the Holy City under shelter of a pious wife; or children trusting that the obedience of devout parents will be taken as an offset against their own wrong doings; but a rigid separation will most assuredly be made. The angels of GOD will be ready at HIS bidding to "sever the wicked from among the just," and consign them to the prison-house of endless despair.

Solemn as our reflections must be, in view of death and eternity, there is nothing which need render any one melancholy or miserable, if he has made his peace with GOD. See the Christian on his dying bed! He examines his heart and his life. He confesses to GOD every known sin, and prays that the blood of CHRIST may wash his guilt away. He sends for his minister, and, in penitence and faith, receives once more the most comfortable sacrament of the LORD's supper. He commends himself, and all who are near and dear to him, to the kind protection of his Heavenly FATHER, and dies in peace. In contrast with this departure of the just, behold Voltaire blaspheming and supplicating the MOST HIGH in the same breath, his best friends fleeing from his bedside, and declaring the sight too awful to be witnessed. Hear the cowardly and aban-

doned Paine, imploring the mercy of that despised REDEEMER, whose offers of salvation he had so long treated with contempt.

Who is the wise man? The mocking infidel, or the humble follower of JESUS? There can be but one reply. Let all, then, act accordingly. The neglected Bible should be daily studied, and the interrupted seasons of prayer be regularly observed. Profane and unholy words should no longer fall like poison from the lips, nor unclean imaginations dwell within the heart. It is charitably assumed that none of you are so much of pagans as to be living unbaptized. "The one shall be taken, and the other left." Much sooner than you think, this startling prediction shall be fulfilled in you. Are you making all needful preparation to depart?

## SERMON V.

### THE BIRTH OF A SAVIOUR.

[CHRISTMAS.]

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Unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a SAVIOUR.—ST LUKE ii. 11.

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A GROUP of persons had gathered one day, by chance, round a blind man, who had taken his station on a bridge over the London canal, and was engaged in reading a Bible with *raised letters*,—a curious invention which enables so many deprived of the gift of sight, to share in a pleasure hitherto unknown to them.

Receiving from the passers-by their little offerings for the relief of his bodily wants, he ministered to them spiritual blessings from the exhaustless treasury of God's word.

A gentleman, on his way home from the city, observed the crowd, and stopped in the outskirts of it to see what the object of attraction could be. Just at that moment, the poor man, who was reading the *fourth* chapter of the book of Acts, lost his place, and while trying to find it with his fingers, continued to repeat the last clause which he had read, "*None other name,—none other name,—none—*"

Some of the lookers-on smiled at the blind man's embarrassment; but the gentleman went on his way musing.

He had long felt the burden of his sins, and had been trying in various ways to find peace of mind. All his efforts, thus far, had been ineffectual to relieve his accusing conscience of its load, and enable him to rejoice in GOD.

The words of Holy Scripture which he had just now heard from the blind man, sang their solemn music to his troubled soul,—“*None other name!*” Even after he had reached his home, and retired to bed, the same sweet words, like village chimes from some time-stained, ivy-covered tower, sounded loudly as before, —“*None other name!*”

With the opening dawn, he fancied he heard them still; the truth of GOD found an entrance into his, hitherto, benighted soul, and he awoke to a new and holy life.

“I see it all! I see it all!” he cried out in transports of gladness. “I have been trying to be saved by my own works; but it is JESUS alone who can save me. To HIM I will look. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name,—*none other name, none other name*, under heaven, whereby we must be saved.”

If the tidings had been brought to you, to-day, that all the wealth of the world had unexpectedly become yours, the announcement would be inconceivably less important for you, than the real tidings of Christmas —which assure us of the birth of a SAVIOUR.

It was on a mild December night, nearly nineteen hundred years ago, that a company of humble shepherds were watching their flocks in the lovely, quiet valley, a mile eastward from Bethlehem. Here, long ages before, had been born the poor shepherd boy, who became the anointed King of Israel; and, in the same place, under circumstances of yet greater poverty, was born also the GOOD SHEPHERD, who is KING of KINGS, and LORD of LORDS; the SAVIOUR of a lost world.

The weary hours were moving slowly onward, the simple shepherds listening to the distant baying of the hungry wolves, and looking with interest at the shining stars, when, suddenly the whole expanse of sky became radiant with overpowering brightness, and a heavenly visitant appeared before their astonished eyes. Terrified and "sore afraid," as they well might be, the angel hastened to reassure them with the marvellous announcement, "*Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born, this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is CHRIST the LORD!*"

The world has always been careful to mark the birth-days of its benefactors by becoming honors, and to hand down their memories from age to age. Is it any wonder, then, that Christians, from the very beginning, have cherished, with gratitude and joy, the birth-day of HIM who came to be their SAVIOUR?

O, unsearchable love of the LORD JESUS, which led HIM thus to be born as man, that for man HE might die, and thus pay the price of his redemption!

We may fairly claim that it would not have been enough, had the gratitude of GOD's people prompted them to honor *some* day in the year, in memory of HIS inestimable gift,—the gift of HIS dear SON, to be their SAVIOUR. Indeed, it would occasion surprise, which words could not possibly express, had the *precise time* of HIS birth been lost sight of;—and if we were not able to say, even after the lapse of so many ages,—as emphatically as did the angel to the Shepherds of Bethlehem, “Unto you is born, *this day*, (this very Christmas day), in the city of David, a SAVIOUR!” So many attempts have been made, in these later times, to cast contempt upon this point, that a few words may well be spent in its vindication.

St. Luke, [ii: 1-7], mentions an enrolment, or taxing, as having been commanded by Cæsar Augustus, the Roman Emperor. It is a plain proposition, that by determining the date of this enrolment, we fix the time of the SAVIOUR's birth. Writers of the Western Church were accustomed to look into the state records for this purpose, which had been so carefully preserved in imperial Rome.

Justin Martyr, who flourished only one hundred and forty years after CHRIST, referred the Emperor, Antoninus Pius, and the Roman Senate, to the census made at Bethlehem, in accordance with the Emperor's decree, as sure proof of the date of the SAVIOUR's birth. “There is a certain village,” he says, “in the land of Judea, distant thirty-five stadia from Jerusalem, in which CHRIST JESUS was born; as ye can learn



from the enrolments completed under Cyrenius, your first Procurator in Judea."

It should be borne in mind, that when Justin Martyr made this statement, he was in Rome, where he had ample opportunity for consulting the document in question; and, surely, nothing but the most undoubted evidence of its existence and authenticity, could have led him to hazard so bold and unqualified an assertion.

Marcion, an early heretic, had denied that CHRIST had been born in infancy, and Tertullian, who flourished A. D. 200, in answering this point, mentions, at the close of his irresistible argument, "the census, or enrolment of Augustus, which the Roman archives preserved, as a faithful witness of the LORD's nativity."

This incidental statement is all the more convincing, because it comes in by the way, and is given as a fact which no one would be foolish enough to dispute.

Among the voluminous writings of St. Augustine, thirteen sermons for Christmas day have been preserved, in one of which he remarks: "As the Church hath handed down, John the Baptist was born on the 8th before the Kalends of July, (June 24th); but the LORD was born on the 8th before the Kalends of January, (December 25th)."

The golden-mouthed Chrysostom preached a Christmas sermon, in the city of Antioch, on the 25th day of December, A. D. 386,—about fifteen hundred years ago, when he said to his hearers, "Ye may expect a worthy reward of this your zeal, from CHRIST, who *to-day was born in the flesh.*"

It appears from a Christmas sermon of Paul, Bishop of Emesa, A. D. 431, that the 25th of December was generally celebrated by all branches of the Church, before the Council of Ephesus.

As to the thread-bare objection so often urged, that the shepherds would not have been watching their flocks, in the open field, on a bleak December night, it is only necessary to state that, although Bethlehem is in an elevated region, it is by no means a very cold one.

St. Jerome, who lived there many years, describes the climate as milder than that of Rome. The mercury usually stands, all the month of December, at  $46^{\circ}$ . Corn is sown during this time; and grass and herbs spring up after the rains, so that the Arabs drive their flocks down from the mountains into the plains. The most delicate do not feel the need of fires before the end of November; and some even pass the whole winter without them.

If any historical fact is well established,—it is this one;—that our SAVIOUR was born on the 25th of December; the day which the Church throughout the world has united to celebrate in honor of HIS coming in the flesh.

“Joyful all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With the angelic host proclaim,  
CHRIST is born in Bethlehem.”

We speak of this holy season as a joyful time, and even the most worldly wish their friends “a happy Christmas!”

True Christmas joy, however, must be found in something besides the gathering again of the scattered members of the family, the innocent mirth, and the abundance of bodily comforts. It must be joy in CHRIST as our SAVIOUR.

A poor, affrighted one, just rescued, by a timely reprieve, from the gallows, or from some other dreadful form of death, will give no thought to food, nor clothing, nor other petty cares; but his whole mind will be engrossed with this one thing; his great deliverance. And so should it be with all of us, whom the SON of GOD came to save,—to save both body and soul from hell. O, if we had that sense of the peril of our souls, which we often feel for our bodies, when they are suffering under pain and disease, our gratitude would be much more heartfelt, when we celebrate the birth-day of the SAVIOUR.

The “good-tidings of great joy” proclaim to us GOD’s tender love. HE gave HIS well-beloved SON, “WHO, for us men, and for our salvation, came down from Heaven, and was incarnate by the HOLY GHOST of the Virgin Mary,” and that, too, “without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin.”\*

We hail the blessed Babe of Bethlehem, on this HIS birth-day, and claim HIM as our ALMIGHTY SAVIOUR, full of grace and truth, with forgiveness upon HIS gracious lips, and eternal life in HIS hands.

Long years ago a ship was wrecked on the stormy coast of Cornwall; but, through GOD’s merciful pro-

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\* “Proper Preface” for Christmas day, in the Communion office.

vidence, no lives were lost. On the Sunday following, the rescued sailors went to the nearest parish church, where thanks were publicly given for the wonderful deliverance.

The clergyman tried to improve the occasion by reminding his hearers of the sinner's imminent peril, and of the SAVIOUR's amazing love. Among other illustrations adapted to the condition of the hardy seamen, he said: "Imagine the situation of a drowning man, who feels that all his own efforts are unavailing, and that he is fast sinking beneath the overwhelming waters. Imagine what would be his feelings, if suddenly a plank floated within his reach, and if, on taking hold of it, he found it would bear his weight!"

"My fellow sinners," he added, "this is your case, and my own! We are like the drowning mariner. CHRIST is the plank of safety. This plank will bear. Oh, refuse not, delay not, to seize upon it! This plank will bear; yes, sinner, *this plank will bear!*"

The blessing was pronounced, and the simple-minded congregation dispersed. Fourteen years went by, and the whole incident had faded from the preacher's mind, when he received a most urgent message, to hasten to a neighboring village, to see a dying man. He went at once, and, on entering the sick-room, saw a perfect stranger, evidently near his end.

He kneeled down by the bedside, and said in a gentle voice: "My brother, you have sent for me, and I am come. You are soon to go hence to meet God, face to face. Tell me on what hope you are resting for eternity."

The dying man was conscious, but the power of speech had left him. "If you cannot answer in words," continued the clergyman, "will you give me a sign, a token, to signify whether or not your hope is now in CHRIST?"

By a last effort of expiring nature, the sick man exclaimed, "*The plank bears!*"

The long-forgotten sermon had not been preached in vain. In one soul, at least, the good seed had borne fruit to everlasting life. The same ALMIGHTY SAVIOUR, who carried that poor sailor to his eternal home, is able and willing to save us also. How, then, can we hope to escape, "if we neglect so great salvation?" Even those among us who claim to be disciples of the LORD JESUS, may well ask ourselves, in self-abasement and sorrow, where are the fruits of our love to HIM? What sacrifices are we making for HIS cause?

As we behold the Babe of Bethlehem in the manger, to-day, and remember what humiliation and suffering HE endured for us, we must be cold and careless, indeed, if we are not stirred up to a better measure of service.

Meeting one another, in peace and love, at the Holy Communion, now, we may expect to receive from our Blessed LORD, such strength as will enable us to give HIM deeper and fuller love.

Here, in the presence of the "Prince of Peace," let old quarrels, and enmities, and strifes be buried and forgotten.

By the remembrance of HIM, who, for our sakes, forsook the glories of Heaven and HIS royal throne,

and became so poor as to have no home; no place to lay His head; may our hearts be moved with tender sympathy, for His suffering children, and may we gladly do what we can to make them happy on the return of joyful Christmas.

I can offer for myself, and for you, no better prayer than this; that each return of the SAVIOUR'S birthday may find us more and more like HIM; more childlike, more humble, more pure and holy, more affectionate, more resigned, more full of the love of God.

## SERMON VI.

### THE PEOPLE IN DARKNESS SEEING A GREAT LIGHT.

[FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.]

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The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.—ISAIAH IX. 2.

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THE repetition of the Collect for the Festival of our LORD'S Nativity, on this Sunday, shows that it is to be regarded as a sort of Lower Christmas, in the celebration of which not a little of the joy which we felt on HIS birth-day, still remains with us.

The words of the text, which form a part of one of the Christmas lessons, besides their original reference to important events in Jewish history, have a further application to the office of the MESSIAH, and to the blessings which should be secured to the world by the Gospel. The whole chapter is composed of mingled threatenings and promises; rays of brightness, as it were, casting their beams before them, to light up the surrounding gloom.

By "*the people that walked in darkness*," was meant, literally, the inhabitants of the region of Galilee, who

lived at comparatively a remote distance from the national Capitol, and the Temple. They enjoyed few religious privileges, and were surrounded by heathen tribes, whose influence over them was always for evil.

The tribes of Israel were to be carried away into captivity, a calamity which would especially affect the ten tribes—the northern portion of the land—the district of Galilee; since these tribes would return no more.

Yet, even this region so overwhelmed with misfortune, and wrapped in gloom, was to be visited with a striking manifestation of God's favor. Here, in due time, was to appear that "True LIGHT," which was to enlighten the darkness of this evil world, even our adorable LORD and SAVIOUR. [St. John i: 9].

Darkness is a common emblem of ignorance and error. When the gloomy veil of a starless night is drawn over the fair face of nature, every pleasant object fades away from view, and all that cheers the sight, or directs our uncertain steps, vanishes. And so had the accumulation of religious errors, thickening with each succeeding age, hidden from the minds of men all-saving knowledge of God, and "their foolish heart was darkened." [Romans i: 21]. Even the most favored portions of the earth were visited by this grievous calamity, and everywhere its inhabitants were "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death."

The mere absence of light, however, by no means constituted the full measure of their misery. "The dark places of the earth," says the psalmist, "are full of the habitations of cruelty." [Ps. lxxiv: 20]. The



same is true, after the long lapse of ages, and in spite of the great work which Civilization and Christianity have been able to accomplish.

We are all familiar with the dark and degraded condition of things which once so generally prevailed. The very men who planned and built the pyramids of Egypt, worshipped beasts and creeping things, and the river which brought fertility to their land.

The Phœnecians, who claimed for themselves the proud distinction of having invented letters, and whose knowledge of military and naval arts was certainly considerable, chained the images of their gods to their altars, lest they should make their escape through fear; while such haughty Romans as Cicero and Augustus Cæsar, carefully observed the entrails of slaughtered victims, or watched the flight of birds, to appease their angry divinities, or to learn the fate of a projected campaign.

Even in our own day, in all the dark places of the earth, the same deplorable ignorance is met with. A recent traveller in Java saw incense burning before a picture of the Emperor Napoleon, in a gilt frame, and men and women paying divine honor to it.

It would be too shocking to speak of the human sacrifices still offered, in various parts of benighted Africa, and in the islands of the South Sea; of the votaries of Juggernaut, in India, casting themselves down to the earth to be crushed by the wheels of his chariot; of parents murdering their children to be rid of the trouble of them, and of children dragging forth

their decrepit parents to die of hunger, or consigning them to the waters of the Ganges.

No unpractised hand need attempt to sketch the fearful picture of people "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death," when St. Paul has done it in so masterly a manner, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. Surely, no one can contemplate the horrors of it, without a shudder. What a relief to the mind to be able to turn from it, to the prospect of something better! "*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.*"

According to the figurative language of the Scriptures, *Light* is not only an emblem of knowledge, but of joy, rejoicing, and deliverance. It stands opposed to moral darkness, and to seasons of judgment and calamity.

Light was the first created, and the purest of all GOD'S visible works, and the one which HE has chosen as the emblem of HIMSELF. Without GOD, the soul has no knowledge of the way to happiness, no idea of the beauty of holiness, and no real comfort under the trials and troubles of life. The LORD alone can be its light and its salvation. [Ps. xxvii: 1].

As the ALMIGHTY FATHER is "light, and in HIM is no darkness at all," so is our adorable SAVIOUR, also, "the true light," being "GOD of GOD, and Light of Light," as we are taught to say in the Nicene Creed; begotten of the FATHER from all eternity, with whom HE is of one substance, and the co-equal in power and glory. And so the children of GOD are said to be

"children of light," [St. Luke xvi: 8; Ephes v: 8]; and are commanded to walk in light, even "in the light of the LORD." [Is. ii: 5]. This, then, is the keynote of our rejoicings at Christmas-tide, that "the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." [1st John ii: 8].

"The race that long in darkness pined,  
Have seen a glorious light;  
The people now behold the dawn,  
Who dwelt in death and night.

To hail thy rising, Sun of life,  
The gathering nations come;  
Joyous as when the reapers bear  
Their harvest treasures home.

To us the promised Child is born;  
To us the SON is given;  
HIM shall the tribes of earth obey,  
And all the hosts of heaven."

The secret of all true joy, is our being brought within the sacred influence of the Gospel, and the occasion of misery and woe is estrangement from GOD, and the loss of HIS love and favor. The more closely, therefore, that we walk in the footsteps of our adorable SAVIOUR, the greater the measure of our happiness. Light streams forth from HIM, upon the road which we are to travel, in making our way safely to our Heavenly Home; a light which discloses its stumbling-blocks, and pitfalls, and in the midst of its perplexing turnings and windings, leaves us in no bewildering doubt as to the direction we ought to take.

"I once happened to be on a visit to a great castle," says Bishop Villiers, "situated on the top of a hill. There was a steep cliff, at the bottom of which was a rapid river. Late one night, there was a woman anxious to get home from that castle, in the midst of a thunder storm. The night was blackness itself; the woman was asked to stop until the storm was over, but she declined; and being importuned to take a lantern, that she might be able to keep on the right road, but she was equally obstinate in refusing this, insisting that she could do very well without it.

The next day the lifeless body of the foolish woman was washed to the shore of the swollen river; she having wandered from the narrow pathway, in the darkness, and fallen over the rocky cliff." Alas! how many, before and since, have miserably perished, because they have refused the light of GOD's truth, and the merciful offer of that SAVIOUR, who declares, "I am the light of the world; and he that followeth ME, shall have the light of life!" [St. John viii: 12].

In such a course, our road to heaven will not be gladdened by the false glow and fading colors of worldly joy, but with a steady, unflickering light, an earnest of the brightness of our FATHER'S House. Walking as "children of the day," [1st Thes. v: 5], and as those who have escaped, by GOD's mercy, out of the land of the shadow of death, we may feel safe in the guidance of HIM who was to be the "GREAT LIGHT," for the weary wanderers in the years of their banishment and exile.

Having enjoyed this precious privilege ourselves, we must be very indifferent Christians, if we are not sincerely anxious that others should share it with us.

When the great German poet, Goethe, discovered the darkness of death to be gathering about him, his eyes refusing any longer to perform their office, he cried out, almost frantically, "Open the shutters, and let in more light!"

These last words were mournfully significant of a deeper darkness which reigned within his soul.

Bethink you, my friends, whether some perishing sinner, whose bewilderment and ignorance, you have the ability to relieve, may not have a claim on you for light, and whether it will be safe in you to withhold it.

"Shall we, whose souls are lighted  
With wisdom from on high;  
Shall we to men benighted  
The lamp of life deny?"

## SERMON VII.

### THE NAME OF JESUS.

[FESTIVAL OF THE CIRCUMCISION.]

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When eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, His name was called JESUS.—ST. LUKE ii. 21.

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ALTHOUGH the Christian year begins with Advent, the Church does not allow her children to forget that they are living in the world; and, therefore, she honors the opening of the *civil* year by the celebration of one of her holy feasts, *the feast of the Circumcision of our LORD*.

“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by JESUS CHRIST.” The year begins with the day on which the Holy Child, *made of a woman*, submits to the legal rite which makes HIM a debtor to the law, and designates HIM as ‘made *under the law*, to redeem those that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of laws.’ To-day His saving work began in blood, and being circumcised, HE undertook to fulfil the law; which he alone per-

fectly fulfilled, and so shewed the law to be 'holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.' \*

HE who came to fulfil the whole law, condescended, on this day, to be subject to it, and so, at eight days old, HIS life of suffering began. That pain endured by the little innocent Child, was the beginning of our salvation; a pain which grew more and more intense and excruciating, until it came to the full in HIS agonies, on Good Friday.

A minute account of the institution of the rite of Circumcision is found in Genesis xvii, and the reasons of it given. It was to be a sign, henceforth, that the parents of the Hebrews and their families had been received into covenant with GOD.

Our blessed LORD submitted to this requirement of the law, that HE might obey all the commands of HIS FATHER; that HE might prove HIMSELF a true descendent of Abraham, according to the flesh; and from the very outset of HIS life upon earth, begin to shed HIS precious blood for us.

With all their spiritual blindness, the Jews knew that Circumcision was no mere outward ceremony, but that it had reference to their souls. It was not left for St. Paul to explain, that it was not only "outward in the flesh, but a circumcision of the heart;" [Romans ii: 28], since Moses had said, in plainest words, "circumcise the foreskin of your heart; and be no more stiff-necked," [Deut. x: 16]. Baptism which is the Christian's circumcision, requires him to "put

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\* Coxe's "Thoughts on the Church Service."

away the sins of the flesh," [Colossians ii: 11], and so the Jews, according to the grace then afforded them, were expected to do likewise. As the mere rite of circumcision could not save them, without the addition of holiness of heart and life, so Baptism, in us, must be followed by obedience, which is the only sure evidence of faith. Hence, we pray in the collect for this day; "Grant us the true circumcision of the Spirit."

The beginning of a New Year ought to find us more ready to engage in the work of cutting away the evil from our hearts, painful though it be, and thus to prove that we are CHRIST'S disciples, by crucifying the flesh, with the affections and lusts. Remembering the perfect obedience of our Blessed LORD, let us learn from HIM not to follow our own will, but to submit ourselves to spiritual guidance with all cheerfulness and meekness.

When ever we are tempted to love our own way, and seek our own pleasure, let us turn our eyes on the SAVIOUR, and see HIM in the act of HIS circumcision, HIS baptism, HIS attendance on the services of the Temple, HIS observance of holy days, HIS constant self-denials, and let us pray for grace and strength to bend our own tempers and dispositions to be like HIS. On this day our blessed LORD was circumcised, and on this day HE received that name which reveals HIS unspeakable love towards us.

Parents choose such names for their children as suit them best; but neither the blessed Virgin Mary, the mother of our LORD, nor Joseph, had anything to



do with the selection of the name of the Babe of Bethlehem.

The ALMIGHTY FATHER, who chose the name of our LORD's forerunner, sending word to Zacharias, by the mouth of an angel, that the son promised to him, in his old age, should be called *John*, [St. Luke ii: 13]; the same GOD appointed the name by which the MESSIAH should be known, saying to the lowly handmaiden, so highly honored, "*thou shalt call His name JESUS.*" [St. Luke ii: 31].

The angel explains the reason why this name was given: "Thou shalt call HIS name JESUS; *for HE shall save HIS people from their sins.*" [St. Matt. i: 21].

It should be mentioned, however, that this was not a new name framed for the occasion. Syrian and Egyptian Kings had assumed the proud title of Saviours; and, in other lands, those who had been distinguished for great and noble deeds had been hailed as "Saviours of their country."

JESUS is the Greek form of the Hebrew word Joshua, and two persons in Old Testament history had been called by this name: one of them, the commander who succeeded Moses; and the other, the high priest who was conspicuous in the building of the second temple.

The Babe of Bethlehem, however, received the name JESUS, on this feast of the circumcision, because HE had a new and a special claim to it. Others had been temporal deliverers, saving the Jews from the hands of their enemies, but this holy Child, "the SON of the HIGHEST," [St. Luke ii: 32]; was called a SAVIOUR.

for a nobler reason; because HE should rescue the soul from ruin; "HE *saves HIS people from their sins.*"

Well, therefore, may the Scriptures make such frequent and emphatic mention of HIS name! It is called a "*worthy* name," [St. James ii: 7]; a "*holy* name," [St. Luke i: 49]; a "*great* name," [Ps. xcix: 3]; an "*excellent* name," [Heb. i: 4]; a "*blessed* name," [1st Tim. i: 11]; a "*glorious* name," [Ps. lxxii: 19]; an "*everlasting* name," [Is. lvi: 5]; and "a name which is above every name," [Philip ii: 9].

"His name was called JESUS," is the brief record of the text. "This is the name," says Jeremy Taylor, in his "Great Exemplar," "which we engrave in our hearts, and write upon our foreheads, and pronounce with our most harmonious accents, and rest our faith upon, and place our hopes in, and love with the overflowings of charity, joy, and adoration."

The Babe of Bethlehem was called JESUS, the SAVIOUR; and such, indeed, HE was, and is, and will be, to all who will receive HIM. In that prevailing name, unnumbered myriads have craved God's mercy, and have found it.

By the reception of this name, HE tacitly pledged HIMSELF to the performance of a certain office; an office which HE has most fully discharged.

"How sweet the name of JESUS sounds

In a believer's ear;

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,

And drives away his fear."

What is due from us to such a SAVIOUR? Will

mere formal professions of our faith, and even the warmest words of love, suffice?

Mark the career of the LORD JESUS from the day of HIS circumcision, when HE received HIS name, until HE closed HIS three and thirty years of self-denial, and labor, and suffering, upon the earth, as the "Man of Sorrows," [Is. liii: 3], contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of his enemies, and to endure the agonies of the Cross; and then, let us ask ourselves whether we ought to be satisfied with what we are doing in the way of obedience to HIS commandments, and in our efforts to promote HIS glory?

Shall it be all *deeds* on HIS part, and little more than *words*, on ours?

The opening of a New Year may well be a time for resolving to do better, and for making a beginning in that direction; and GOD's gracious providence will have spared us to little purpose, unless we are both willing and anxious to do it.

The rapid flight of time, and the certain approach of death, ought to lead the thoughtless and impenitent to consider their ways.

"How many precious souls are fled  
To the vast regions of the dead,  
Since to this day the changing sun  
Through his last period run!

We yet survive; but who can say,  
'Or through this year, or month, or day,  
I shall retain this vital breath,  
Thus far, at least, in league with death?'"

It is not only "a faithful saying," but one "worthy of all acceptation, that CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save sinners." [1st Tim. i: 15].

Shall this merciful purpose have brought HIM down from heaven, and shall the very name conferred on HIM, on this day, remind you so touchingly of it, and you not only refuse to welcome HIM as your SAVIOUR, but even harden your hearts against HIM?

You need not plead your unworthiness, as an excuse for longer day. It is sinners whom HE came to save.

One of the wonders of the loadstone is this; that instead of attracting to itself pearl, or gold, or other precious things, it draws the rough iron; a metal much less esteemed. And so the SAVIOUR, leaving the angels, and those of high degree, seeks to embrace in the arms of HIS mercy, the poor, and the outcast, and the despised. Let HIM not seek in vain!

"O, may the sweet, the blissful theme,

Fill every heart and tongue;

Till strangers love thy charming NAME,

And join the sacred song!"

## SERMON VIII.

### THE SON OF GOD MADE MAN.

[SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.]

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The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us—full of grace and truth.—ST. JOHN i. 14.

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“THEOLOGY,” says Archbishop Trench, “when it limits itself to the immediately practical and useful, dismissing everything which it does not esteem such, will not long retain even that practical and useful, to which it has been willing to sacrifice everything besides. Its pastures will lose their greenness soon, its lower levels will become dry, and parched, and barren, if they be not fed and refreshed from the upper springs. Its conversation must be habitually in heaven, if it shall really have anything which is worth the telling upon earth. We must learn to connect our LORD’s manifestation in the flesh, not indeed less with all which followed it, HIS death, HIS resurrection, HIS ascension, HIS glorified sitting at the right hand of the MAJESTY on high; but to connect it more with that which preceded, HIS eternal generation, the glory which HE had with the FATHER before the world was.”

Our minds are so fully occupied with the gracious office which the LORD JESUS performed for us as our SAVIOUR, that we devote little time to the contemplation of HIM, as the everlasting SON of the FATHER. And yet, we are free to confess that none other than GOD's own SON, one with HIM in glory and dominion, could have borne upon HIS shoulders the mighty ruin of our race, and thus prevent its utter and irretrievable fall.

In the beginning, the SON of GOD had stretched out HIS almighty hand, and created all things, by the word of HIS power, [St. John i : 3, Heb. i : 2, etc.]; and now that Satan had brought sin and death into a world, once so fair, the same DIVINE BEING condescended to come in weakness, and in the likeness of the fallen creatures whom HE purposed to restore to their forfeited inheritance.

HE became "*the new Man*," [Ephes. ii : 15]; "the second Adam," [1st Cor. xv : 45-7], who was to make a fresh beginning of our apostate race. The name applied to our SAVIOUR, in the text, is one which calls for especial notice: "The WORD."

St. John, by the use of it, at the very opening of his Gospel, lifts our thoughts from the human, to the DIVINE nature of our Blessed LORD. The name "WORD" was not a new one, but a designation commonly recognized in connection with the MESSIAH. In the Jewish writings HE was often spoken of as "the WORD."

Thus, in the Targum, or Paraphrase of [Deut. xxvi : 17-18], it is said: "Ye have appointed THE WORD OF

GOD a King over you this day, that HE may be your GOD."

The Chaldee version of [Isaiah xlv: 12], reads: "I, by MY WORD, have made the earth, and created man upon it."

It has been thought by some of the learned, that the Jews borrowed the term LOGOS, or WORD, from the Platonists; but it is far more probable that it was received from the Holy Scriptures. They need not have gone beyond the familiar verse of the Psalm: "By the WORD of the LORD were the heavens made." [Ps. xxxiii: 6].

Various reasons may be discovered why this name of "the WORD" was given to the second Person of the adorable Trinity. It was designed to teach us that the SON was "with the FATHER," somewhat as a word dwells in the mind. It is the utterance of the mind; and the SON is the utterance (so to speak) of the FATHER. Begotten from all Eternity, HE yet abstracted nothing from the FATHER; whose very image and representation HE yet was and is. And the name seems especially designed to preclude many of the thoughts which the mention of *Sonship* is sure to awaken, and which cannot attach to a Being "without body, parts, or passions." Then, further, CHRIST was fitly called "the WORD" because HE came upon earth "to declare" the FATHER [i: 18], whom HE revealed to every creature, somewhat as words reveal the heart and mind of man. "All things," HE said, "that I have heard of MY FATHER, I have made known unto you." [xv: 15]. Accordingly, it is stated in the

Epistle to the Hebrews, GOD "hath in these last days *spoken* unto us by HIS SON."

Lastly, it may be observed that a *word* becomes known by clothing itself with a *sound*. Expressed in writing, it becomes visible also. And somewhat thus it was, that the Eternal WORD, by assuming flesh, manifested HIMSELF to the world; and was beheld, not only by human eyes, but, as the Apostle remarks, was "*seen of Angels*." [1st Tim. lxxiii: 16].\*

An humble-minded Christian was once asked by a bold scoffer whether he could give any sensible reason why JESUS CHRIST is called "the WORD?"

All unconscious of the motive which had prompted the question, the good man answered, with mild simplicity and decision, "I suppose, as words are the medium of communication between us, the term is used in the Holy Scriptures to demonstrate that the LORD JESUS is the only medium between GOD and man; I know no other reason." The scoffer's mouth was shut.

"The WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us." How much that pertains to the highest doctrines of the Christian faith, is crowded into this brief sentence!

It cannot be doubted that St. John by the term "the WORD" means a *Person*, and not a mere attribute of GOD. He would not have been guilty of the absurdity of telling us that GOD's wisdom belonged to HIM from the beginning, as if it could ever have been

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\* Plain Commentary on the Holy Gospels, in loco.



separated from HIM. And how could the attribute of wisdom be made flesh, and dwell upon earth?

"The WORD" was not only a PERSON, but one who had existed long before the time when HE appeared in the form of man.

"*In the beginning* was the WORD," [St. John i: 1]; before the world was made, HE was "with GOD." Even this does not express the whole of the important truth. "The WORD" was a *Person*; a Person whose existence dated back long ages; a Person who was *Divine*. St. John applies the name GOD to HIM; "the WORD was GOD."

And this "WORD" was "made flesh," when our adorable SAVIOUR appeared in the world, as the Babe of Bethlehem. HE was GOD before HE was made flesh, and HE was GOD afterwards; and thus there was a mysterious union of the two natures, but no transformation.

The text contains yet another great Gospel doctrine. "The WORD" thus "made flesh," might still have dwelt in heaven, which had been HIS home from the beginning. So far from this, HE condescended to dwell with sinful mortals upon earth. He who had reposed in the innermost love of the everlasting FATHER, came in lowliness and poverty; HIS birth-place, a stable; He grew up to manhood in a despised city, and worked as a carpenter. HE was contented to live in a world which made light of HIM, because HE so loved and pitied us, that HE had consented to die for us. No language could so well describe the temper and disposition of our Blessed LORD, during the three and

thirty years of HIS earthly sojourn, as that used by St. John in the text. He was "*full of grace and truth.*"

While the law of Moses had been "a ministration of death and condemnation," the SON of GOD, manifested in the flesh, came to proclaim pardon and peace. HIS words were full of grace, whether HE stopped in the gate of Nain, to raise the widow's son; or wept with Martha and Mary, at their brother's grave; or when HE said to the penitent woman, once so abandoned an outcast, "Go, and sin no more."

The LORD JESUS was "*full of truth*", also. HE was the end, and the fulfilment of types and shadows; the true bread that came down from heaven; the true rock which followed the people in the wilderness; the true tabernacle, and temple; and, more than all, the truth which HE proclaimed, and which we are commissioned to teach, is that which alone can make us wise unto salvation.

When we hear of an event so passing strange, so unprecedented, as that recorded in the text, we may well ask ourselves, why it was that the SON of GOD thus condescended to become man, and to suffer, and to die? It was that HE might vindicate the majesty of the violated law of GOD, and restore us to the DIVINE favor.

Shall we then be indifferent about that which cost HIM such a painful sacrifice?

I have devoted thus much time to the unfolding of the text, because it is one of the most important and suggestive in the Bible, and because it is one well

calculated to leave an indelible impression upon the mind.

The distinguished German scholar, Francis Junius, had observed with great sorrow, that his son was fast drifting away from the safe anchorage of an orthodox faith, into the troubled waters of doubt and unbelief. The unhappy father placed the New Testament in the hands of the young man, and drew his attention to the remarkable verse, which has formed the subject of this sermon. I shall let the son finish the story.

"I read the grand chapter of the evangelist, concerning 'the WORD made flesh,' and was so affected, that I instantly became struck with the divinity of the argument, and the majesty and authority of the composition, as infinitely surpassing the highest flights of human eloquence. My body shuddered; my mind was all amazement, and I cried out, 'O Lord, my GOD, THOU didst remember me, according to THY boundless mercy, and didst bring back the lost sheep to THY flock!'"

May the same appreciation of the love of our compassionate SAVIOUR, who "was incarnate by the HOLY GHOST of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified for us," soften the stubborn hearts of those who have hitherto rejected HIM, and who can claim no share in HIS salvation.

"ALMIGHTY SON, incarnate WORD,  
Our Prophet, Priest, Redeemer, LORD,  
Before THY throne we sinners bend;  
To us THY saving grace extend!"

## SERMON IX.

### THE SERVICE OF CHRIST DEMANDS SACRIFICE.

[EPIPHANY.]

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All Kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall do Him service.—PSALM lxxii. 11.

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ON the great festival known as "*The Epiphany, or the Manifestation of CHRIST to the Gentiles*," the wise men from the East, paid their homage to the new-born King of Nations.

For long years, the inhabitants of the earth had been divided into the two great classes of Jews and Gentiles; but the beginning of the blessed reign of the "Prince of Peace," was to see a new order of things inaugurated. The mighty *hand* of HIM who had fashioned the world, and who had determined the bounds of man's habitations, was to trace out an improved map of the world; blotting out the arrogant monopolies of the bigoted and narrow-minded; and bringing all the descendents of Adam into the bonds of a common brotherhood.

While the choir of angels announce to the Shepherds of Bethlehem, the birth of the infant SAVIOUR,

a star of unwonted size and brilliancy lights up the eastern sky, proclaiming to the philosophers of Chaldea, and Mesopotamia, that the wonderful CHILD of prophecy has made HIS appearance upon earth, to be the REDEEMER of the whole human race. The promised MESSIAH was indeed to be of Jewish descent, according to the flesh; for "salvation was of the Jews," [St. John iv: 22]; but HE was, at the same time, "the expectation of the Gentiles."

Gentile knees first bowed in humble adoration before the new-born KING, and Gentile hands brought the first gifts in token of HIS absolute dominion.

The words of the text have a double sense. When the royal psalmist says, "*All Kings shall fall down before HIM; all nations shall do HIM service,*" the first reference is to the peaceful reign of Solomon, and to the prosperity which the land should enjoy, while he meted out true justice to the people. A more glorious KING than Solomon, however, was one day to sit on David's throne, of whom Solomon was a feeble type. The reign of Solomon, beneficent as it was, lasted but forty years; while the Kingdom of the SON of GOD was to continue as long as heaven and earth should stand, and while sun and moon endured.

And of whom, but of our Blessed LORD, could it with strictest truth be said, "HE shall live, and unto HIM shall be given of the gold of Arabia; prayer shall be made even unto HIM, and daily shall HE be praised?"

Unto whom, but to the LORD JESUS, could the lofty dignity be ascribed, "HIS name shall remain under

the sun among the posterities which shall be blessed through HIM, and all the heathens shall praise HIM?"

The words of fulsome flattery spoken to a dying mortal, "O King, live forever!" can only be true of the everlasting SON of the FATHER, who declares concerning HIS own eternal power, "I am HE that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and have the keys of Hell and Death." [Rev. i: 18].

Blessed Epiphany! Blessed shewing forth of the Incarnate SON of GOD to the eyes of the expectant nations!

What a significant spectacle, when the wisest of the world are seen bowing down before the HOLY CHILD! The eastern sages had followed the guidance of a star, and they sought with anxious care for the KING whose appearance they believed it to betoken. The obscure circumstances in which they found the Babe of Bethlehem could not shake their faith in the lofty claims of ONE to whose birth the very heavens had borne witness.

This was HE whom so many prophets and kings had desired to behold, and although now so poor and despised of men, the magi had faith to discern their LORD. They fell down and worshipped the HOLY CHILD, and presented unto HIM their costliest gifts.

Year by year, on the festival of the Epiphany, this wonderful scene rises up afresh before us, and we feel, even more than at other times, our individual interest in it. And can it be said of us, that our prayers, and creeds, and inspiring hymns, and solemn sacraments, are little more than a sham, and a mockery? Have

we the spirit of self-denial and devotion of the Wise Men in our hearts when we declare in our approach to the Holy Communion; "Here, O LORD, we offer and present ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a living sacrifice unto Thee?"

Are we bringing to the LORD JESUS our best and choicest gifts?

Christians may, oftentimes, be very unmindful of their duty, but it is certainly pleasant to think that the Infant SAVIOUR whom the Wise Men of the East came, as at this time, to worship, is now recognized by millions, in all lands, as KING of KINGS, and LORD of LORDS. Not only the rich and the great, but the poor and the ignorant, also, led by the light of GOD's truth, have found their way to JESUS, and have shared in the blessings of HIS redemption.

"The beams that shine from Sion's hill  
Shall lighten every land;  
The KING who reigns in Salem's towers  
Shall all the world command."

Passing over all the other lessons taught us in the incidents connected with the Epiphany, let us seek to learn this one: *that the service of CHRIST demands sacrifice.* "All Kings shall fall down before HIM; all nations shall do HIM service."

We have seen how cheerfully the Wise Men gave this proof of their sincerity. The discomforts and dangers of a long journey, in those unsettled times, when every mile of the weary way was beset with perils, were not allowed to deter them from the performance of duty. They appeared before the suspicious

and cruel Herod, with undaunted courage, and frankly acknowledged that they had come within the boundaries of his dominion, not to pay homage to him, but to another KING, greater and mightier than he.

The tumult excited by their coming, among the chief priests and saints of Jerusalem, was as little regarded by these devoted men; and their only anxiety was to accomplish the purpose of their journey. Accordingly, they applied to all who could possibly afford them the information which they sought, saying, "Where is HE that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen HIS Star in the East, and are come to worship HIM." [St. Matt. ii: 2].

Let us ask ourselves, what trouble do we take in order to show our reverence and love for the same PRINCE and SAVIOUR? Can we call to mind a single instance, during the whole course of our lives, when we have faced danger, or suffered evil report, for HIS sake? So far from this, has not a very slight degree of personal discomfort often kept us from the services of HIS House, and from participation in HIS heavenly feast?

The conclusion is a very simple one, that the wise men, and multitudes of the devoted servants of God who have lived in all ages, have done much more than was expected of them, or else some of us are doing far too little.

The "*Minimum Christian*" is a name of reproach which too many richly deserve. He is determined to go to heaven as cheaply and as easily as he can. Once a day at public worship on Sundays; a great under-



valuing of the privileges of week-day services; serious apprehensions for his health, on account of inclement weather, when religious duties call him out from his comfortable home; and a careful counting up of the small sums bestowed in charity, and for the furtherance of the Gospel.

As it is with the body, so also with the spirit. When the extremities are cold and languid, it is a sure token that disease has seized upon the heart. The circulation is too slow and irregular, and although life is not extinct, there is a deficiency of vital power, which must soon lead to fatal results.

The same thing holds good, whenever the Christian sinks down into a state of sluggish inactivity. The central fire in the heart needs to be constantly stirred up.

If we are really desirous of honoring the LORD JESUS, and of making sacrifices for HIM, we shall require no reappearance of the bright Star of the Epiphany, to light us on the path of duty. We may always abound in the work of the LORD, and find our happiness therein.

Christians who know the SAVIOUR, now, by faith, and confidently expect, hereafter, to enjoy "the fruition of His glorious Godhead," should prove that they know HIM, by trying to do those things which are pleasing in His sight.

"*All nations shall do HIM service,*" is the emphatic statement of the text. Can we fairly claim that what we are doing for our LORD and MASTER amounts to this? Is it what we ourselves would regard as *service*,

if rendered to us by those whose time and exertions we felt ourselves entitled to?

The service of GOD, is, indeed, a "service of *perfect freedom*," as we often say in our prayers; a service involving no degradation, and no servile fear. After all, however, it is a *service* which HIS obedient children are bound to render. We may, therefore, very properly ask ourselves, whether we are doing what we can for GOD? Do our hearts go along with our lips, in the oft-repeated supplication, that we may "give up ourselves to HIS service, and walk before HIM, in holiness and righteousness, all our days?"

Blessed are they who are thus proving themselves the faithful subjects of the PRINCE of PEACE. They shall be safe and happy under HIS mild and equitable rule, and be sure of an abundant entrance into HIS everlasting Kingdom.

And what can be said of the folly and presumption of those who refuse to submit themselves to CHRIST?

The SAVIOUR HIMSELF has sworn, that unto HIM "every knee shall bow," [Is. xlv: 24]; to what purpose, then, can any hold out against HIM?

The servant of sin has learned from his own bitter experience of it, that it holds him in the most wretched and degrading bondage. It is worse than sorrow, or pain; it disturbs all the peace of life, and turns its very sunshine into darkness.

Now, at this glorious season of the Epiphany, when our adorable SAVIOUR was manifested, "that HE might destroy the works of the Devil, and make us the sons of GOD, and heirs of eternal life," let the sorrowing

and desponding soul bow down before the new-born KING, and claim HIS pardon and protection.

My brother, the LORD JESUS will not turn you away; HE will not even cast a cold and repulsive look upon you. "I saw in my dream" (says old John Bunyan), "that just as Christian came up to the cross, his burden loosed from off his shoulder, and fell from off his back. Then was Christian glad and lightsome, and said with a merry heart, 'HE hath given me rest by HIS sorrow, and life by HIS death!'" Will any one here refuse to let the SAVIOUR do as much for him? Why persist in making the Bible read, that "CHRIST JESUS came into the world to save good people," when the glorious and consoling truth is recorded by the finger of GOD, that the purpose of HIS mission was to *save sinners*?

Remember, also, the guilt and the danger of refusing to submit to HIS will. The same merciful SAVIOUR, now "manifested to take away our sins," [1st John iii: 5], shall soon come as an avenging JUDGE. The gracious lips which once only spoke of mercy and forgiveness, shall utter the terrible sentence, "Those, MINE enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before ME!" [St. Luke xix: 27].

## SERMON X.

### THE CHILDHOOD OF JESUS.

[FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.]

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HE went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.—ST. LUKE II. 51.

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THIRTY years of our SAVIOUR's life upon earth are almost a blank to us, so far as any record on the sacred pages is concerned. The marvels which attend His birth, seem to have passed away from the minds of those who had known of them at the time, and after the return of the HOLY CHILD from Egypt, His days glided on unnoticed, in the humble abode of Joseph and Mary, at Nazareth. Indeed, the whole of His career, from infancy, until His public ministry began, may be described in a single verse of the Evangelist: "The WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us." [St. John i: 14].

"In the case of all rare excellence that is merely human, it is the first object of the biographers of a marvellous man, to seek for surprising stories of his early life. The appetite for the marvellous in this matter is almost instinctive and invariable. All men, almost, love to

discover the early wonders which were prophetic of after generations. In this spirit, the fathers of the primitive Church collected legends of the early life of CHRIST, stories of superhuman infancy; what the infant and the child said and did. Many of these legends are absurd; all, as resting on no authority, are rejected.\* The very fact, however, that more than forty apocryphal gospels were written, at different periods, containing marvellous stories of our Blessed LORD's infancy and childhood, is evidence of the insatiable longing so natural to us, to learn something of that period of His life.

The almost uninterrupted silence of the Scriptures on the subject, was wisely ordered by infinite Wisdom. In spite of this strict reserve, we know that during the darker portions of church history, the Blessed Virgin and the HOLY CHILD became the grand centres of the faith; and it is easy to imagine that a full detail of the events in the infancy and youth of the SAVIOUR, would have fostered, to an inordinate degree, the disposition to substitute the earthly for the spiritual, and even to exalt the worship of the CHILD, above that of the GOD-MAN.

Laying aside, therefore, all vain speculations, and assured that there were good reasons why a silence so unbroken has been preserved concerning points which could not help forward the work of our salvation, let us thankfully ponder over those facts which GOD has seen fit to disclose.

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\* F. W. Robertson's Sermons, ii, pp. 215-16.

We see the shepherds of Bethlehem called by the angel from the fields where they were watching their flocks, by night, to behold the new-born KING, in the manger. On the eighth day, according to the requirements of the law, followed the circumcision, and the bestowal of that Name so dear to the hearts of those whom HE came to save. Then, the HOLY CHILD is brought to the Temple, and presented to the priest for his blessing; when the aged Anna had the joy of her heart fulfilled, and Simeon embracing HIM who was the "Desire of all nations," exclaimed in rapture, "LORD, now lettest THOU THY servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen THY salvation!"

The adoration of the Wise Men from the East, who presented to the CHILD JESUS their costly gifts, was the next event in order; and then the flight into Egypt, when the cries of heart-broken mothers, bereft of their helpless babes, rang so piteously through the narrow streets of Bethlehem.

Although it is vain to conjecture in what part of the land of the Pharaohs, the holy family sojourned, it will be proper to state that at the time referred to, great numbers of Jews resided in Egypt, and many of them were in the enjoyment of special privileges. This fact will explain how that pagan country could be considered as a place of safety for the infant SAVIOUR.

The death of Herod, (attended by excruciating agonies of body, and the tortures of an accusing conscience), permitted the fugitives to return to the land of Israel, probably after an absence of a few months.

"When directed to go into Egypt, Joseph was not told to what place he should return, [Matt. ii: 14]; nor afterwards, when directed to return, was the place designated. It is plain, however, that he did not design to return to Nazareth. He evidently regarded Bethlehem, the city of David, the proper place in which to rear the son of David. The province of Galilee was politically of little weight, and ecclesiastically it was despised; and Nazareth was one of its most inconsiderable villages, to say nothing of the bad name it seems to have borne. He naturally supposed that HE who was of the tribe of Judah should dwell in the land of Judah, the most religious, most sacred part of Palestine; and, as the promised MESSIAH, should be brought up as near as possible to the theocratic centre, where HE might have frequent intercourse with the priests and rabbins, and be educated under the very shadow of the Temple. Only through a special command of GOD, was he led to return with JESUS to Galilee; and that he made his abode in the obscure vale of Nazareth, can only be explained by the fact, of which St. Matthew is wholly silent, that this had been his earlier residence as related by St. Luke."\*

As our LORD spent the larger part of HIS earthly life at Nazareth, we are interested to know that the village was perched on a rocky hill-side, on the western side of the great plain of Esdraelan, and commanded a prospect of wide extent and beauty.

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\* Andrews' Life of our LORD, p. 97.

It was early in April, at the beginning of the Feast of the Passover, that the CHILD JESUS, then twelve years old, went up with Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem; and, according to Jewish custom, was made a disciple of the law, and received a blessing corresponding in some respects to the rite of Confirmation.

This was probably the first time that HE had accompanied them to the holy city, to any of the great Feasts.

At the close of the solemnities, the company had made their first day's journey (always a short one—not more than eight miles), when Joseph and Mary discovered to their astonishment and dismay, that the CHILD JESUS had been left behind. That HE might easily be separated from them without any culpable carelessness on their part, appears from the numbers who formed the caravan, and the parents had taken it for granted that HE was with some of their kindred or near friends.

In anxious haste they retrace their steps, and, after three days of painful suspense, they find HIM in the Temple, seated in the midst of the venerable teachers of the Jewish Law.

And, here, the old painters, without intending it, have strangely perverted the truth, when they represent the HOLY CHILD, so remarkable for sweetness of disposition and humility, as rebuking, and even chiding the learned men. Indeed, the title given to most of these pictures is, "*CHRIST disputing with the doctors.*"

The Scriptural narrative conveys an impression directly the opposite of this; where HE is described as "*hearing the doctors, and asking them questions*" 194



That painter would certainly portray the scene most accurately, who should represent our Blessed LORD, in all the simplicity of boyhood, sitting as a catechised child, and looking up with innocent respect to His venerable teachers, while their amazement, and not His boldness, should seem to say, "What manner of Child is this?"

HE, who eighteen years afterwards, taught His disciples to reverence the duly authorized teachers of the Jewish Church, assuring them that "The Scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat," and ought, therefore, to be obeyed, [St. Matt. xxiii: 2]; would not, at the age of twelve, have arrayed HIMSELF rudely and presumptuously against them.

While dwelling after this manner, upon the few incidents in the childhood of our SAVIOUR, which have been recorded for our learning, it will not be amiss to ask whether some good purpose might not have been accomplished by His tarrying behind in Jerusalem, in the way just described. Might it not be necessary for Joseph and Mary to be reminded that, although the world looked upon them as the parents of the CHILD JESUS, there was ONE who, in a far higher sense, claimed HIM as His only and well-beloved SON?

And while the HOLY CHILD would not remind them of His own divinity, and of the great purpose of His coming into the world, in a way which might seem to mar the honor and obedience which HE had, hitherto, showed them, did not His appearance in the Temple, under circumstances so peculiar, break the marvellous fact to them, without the slightest infringement upon

the rights which they could fairly claim? "The Temple is my HEAVENLY FATHER'S House," HE mildly said, when the blessed Virgin took HIM gently to task, for having occasioned them all this trouble and anxiety, "and did ye not know that I must be there, occupied with MY FATHER'S business?" What a striking contrast between these lofty utterances, which disclosed the greatness and glory of HIS divinity, with the simple record of the text! "HE *went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.*"

No time is left us for dwelling upon these suggestive words. There were never any other parents that were not greater than their child; greater in age; greater in strength; greater in wisdom; greater in knowledge. HE was from eternity; HE was all-wise, all-knowing. And, yet, "HE was subject to them." What a reproof of the impatient petulance of children. What a rebuke of their habitual tendency, to think more highly of themselves, than of their parents.\*

May all the children present here to-day, ponder well this beautiful lesson from the example of their LORD, and learn how good and pleasant, in the eyes of GOD and man, is the sight of a meek, gentle, and obedient child! Ask HIM, in your daily prayers, to make you such as HE was to the Blessed Virgin when HE dwelt in poverty upon the earth. HE understands your feelings, your weaknesses, and your sufferings; and you can say to HIM, with unwavering confidence, "Child though I be, my SAVIOUR can sympathize with

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\* Bp. Doane's Works, iii., p. 211.

me, for HE was once a child like me!" Christian parents! would you have your homes blessed with obedient children? Take Joseph and Mary for your patterns; and, like them, honor GOD, and attend upon the ordinances of HIS House, and teach your children to do likewise.

## SERMON XI.

### THE RESCUED DOVE.

[SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.]

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Though ye have lain amongst the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.—  
PSALM lxxviii: 13.

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THIS noble psalm is ascribed to David, and was probably chanted on the happy day when he brought up the ark of the LORD from the house of Abinadab, in Gibeah, where it had found a temporary shelter, to the holy place prepared for it on Mount Sion. [2d Samuel vi.]

Well might the triumphal procession begin its march, with the exulting strain, "Let GOD arise, and let HIS enemies be scattered; let them also that hate HIM flee before HIM."

The people of GOD are called upon to magnify, with psalms and spiritual songs, the name of the mighty DELIVERER, and then, after a brief description of HIS glorious majesty, there is a natural and touching reference to HIS tender mercy towards the afflicted Israelites,

during the long years of their bondage in Egypt. HE marched before them through the wilderness, guiding them by the pillar of cloud and of fire; HE brought forth water from the flinty rock, and rained down manna from the skies; HE led them by the hand of Moses and Joshua; and put to inglorious flight the mighty hosts of the Pagan Kings of Canaan.

The condition of the Hebrews, in Egypt, had been one of the most complete degradation and misery. If ever a nation existed upon earth, which might be described, under the striking similitude of the text, as "lying amongst the pots," that nation was Israel.

And, so, when this state of affliction and wretchedness, was exchanged for one of dignity and splendor, the same nation may well be compared to an eastern dove, bright and beautiful in its plumage, and shining interchangeably, as with silver and gold.

When the Church of God is settled in her appointed place, like Israel delivered from the brick-kilns of Egypt, and settled in the boundaries of Canaan; when she reposes between the Old covenant and the New, the law of obedience and the gospel of love, inheriting both and keeping both; then is she worthy of her LORD'S loving word: "My dove, My undefiled is but one." [Canticles v: 2]. "She is then glorious and beautiful; holiness and charity bear her up, as a dove is borne on her wings; her purity is brighter than silver, her wisdom shines beyond gold."\*

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\* Plain Commentary on the Psalms, ii., p. 432.

What is true of the Church, in her collective capacity, holds good, also, of her individual members. When one makes his escape from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of GOD, he is invested with the robe of righteousness, and adorned with the graces of the HOLY SPIRIT; a change in his condition quite as striking as that set forth in the imagery of the text.

A modern traveller in Palestine tells us that the psalmist, in this verse, refers to a kind of dove found at Damascus, whose feathers, except the wings, are literally as yellow as gold. [The Land and Book, i, p. 417].

The accomplished Miss Whately, in her "Child-life in Egypt," has this interesting passage, which throws light on the same point: "The flat roofs of the houses are usually in a great state of litter, and there is one thing never seems to be cleared away, and that is the heap of old broken pitchers, sherds, and pots, that in these and similar houses are piled up in some corner. A little before sunset, numbers of pigeons suddenly emerge from behind the pitchers and other rubbish, where they have been sleeping in the heat of the day, or pecking about to find food. They dart upwards, and career through the air in large circles, their outspread wings catching the bright glow of the sun's slanting rays, so that they really resemble shining 'yellow gold;' then, as they wheel round and are seen *against* the light, they appear as if turned into molten silver, most of them being pure white, or else very light-colored. 'Though ye have lain *among the*

*pots*, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.' It was beautiful to see these birds rising clear and unsoiled, as doves always do, from the dust and dirt in which they had been hidden, and soaring aloft in the sky, till nearly out of sight among the bright sunset clouds."

So, too, with the soul, although sunk into degradation, and stained with foul pollution, God's mercy can lift it up, and make it more fresh, and strong, and beautiful than before.

In the spring of the year A. D. 372, a young man just turned of thirty, in great distress of mind, entered his garden in the outskirts of Milan.

The sins of his youth; a youth spent in gross sensuality, weighed heavily on his soul.

Lying under a fig-tree, moaning and shedding a flood of bitter tears, he heard from a neighboring house the voice of a child, saying, over and over, "Take and read! Take and read!"

Regarding this as a divine admonition, he hastened to his friend Alypius, (who was passing through like struggles with himself), and procured from him the roll of St. Paul's epistles, which he had left with him not long before.

"I siezed the roll," he says, in his own graphic account of his conversion, "I opened it, and read in silence the chapter on which my eyes first alighted."

It was the *thirteenth* to the Romans. "*Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envy-*

*ing. But put ye on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."*

This passage was exactly suited to his circumstances. It called on him to give up his wild and wicked course and to begin a new life with CHRIST. That passage was enough to decide his whole future. The gloomy clouds of doubt and despondency rolled away, and peace and joy filled his, hitherto, anxious soul.

In the words of Gaussen, "JESUS had conquered, and the grand career of Augustine, the holiest of the fathers, had begun. After thirty years of revolt, of combats, of falls, of misery; faith, life, eternal peace, came to this erring soul; a new and eternal day had dawned upon it."

What a beautiful illustration of the graphic imagery of the text: "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold."

Well might the venerable Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, who baptized the penitent on the joyful festival of Easter, honor the occasion by the "Te Deum," a hymn conceived in a style so lofty that it is sometimes called the Christian's "Chariot of fire."

The condition of every child of Adam, is, by nature, a degraded and dependent one, and no power short of the HOLY SPIRIT can remove him from it.

It may seem incredible that it should be so, but it is nevertheless true, that while erring man is not ashamed to sin, he is often, most reluctant to acknowledge that he is a sinner. There must be a severe humbling of his stubborn will, before he will frankly



confess that he has "*lain among the pots,*" and that his heart, unchanged by grace, is "desperately wicked." [Jeremiah xvii: 9].

Even in those high points of character, on the possession of which the man of the world so often prides himself, he is seldom quite so perfect as he imagines.

A person of this class was once extolling, in extravagant terms, the virtue of Honesty, what a dignity it imparted to human nature; how much it recommended us to the favor of God; ending of course, with the celebrated line from Pope:—

"An honest man is the noblest work of God."

"However excellent the virtue of Honesty may be," replied his friend, "I fear there are few men in the world who really possess it."

"You surprise," said the other.

"Ignorant as I am of your character," rejoined the first speaker, "I fancy it would be no difficult matter to prove even you to be a dishonest man."

"I defy you;" was the quick and angry answer.

"Will you give me leave, then, to ask you a question or two, and promise not to be offended?"

"Ask your questions, and welcome."

"Have you never met with an opportunity of getting gain by unfair means?" The gentleman paused a moment, and then resumed. "I do not ask whether you ever took advantage of such an opportunity, but simply whether you ever met with such an opportunity? I, for my part, have; and I believe everybody else has."

"Very probably I may," said the other, in a tone more subdued, and less confident than before.

"How did you feel your mind affected on such an occasion? Had you no secret desire, not the least inclination, to seize the advantage which offered? Tell me without any evasion, and consistently with the character which you so greatly admire."

"I must acknowledge, I have not always been absolutely free from every irregular inclination; but—"

"Hold, sir!" interrupted the other, "none of your salvos, you have confessed enough. If you had the *desire*, though you never proceeded to the *act*, you were dishonest in heart. Even this is a breach of the Divine law which requireth truth in the inward parts; and, unless you are pardoned through the blood of JESUS, this would be a just ground of your condemnation, when GOD shall judge the secrets of men."

Let this serve as an illustration, my friends, how utterly impossible it is for us to depend upon our heightened sense of honor, or our unimpeachable morality, as affording us a claim to salvation. The best and holiest of mortals, when brought to see themselves with impartial eyes, will be forced to confess that they have once "*lain among the pots*," and were guilty and undone sinners, until they laid hold of the deliverance provided for us by our adorable REDEEMER.

The purpose of the Gospel is to lift up those that are down, and to make clean and pure all that are unholy. And this end it always *does* accomplish, for such as submit themselves to its requirements.

So long as one is satisfied to "*lie among the pots,*" and to hug his darling sins, his case is hopeless; but let him only form the manly resolution that he will amend his ways and his doings, and accept GOD's proffered help, and he will find himself rising into a purer and more wholesome atmosphere; and the hideous deformities and gross defilements of the flesh will give place to a new and sanctified nature.

You may hitherto, have regarded the text as beautiful and poetic, but as one lacking in point and practical application; but you discover that it is a sweet and consoling promise to those who will set about this great work of amendment.

GOD grant that all among you who are yet in the bondage and debasement of sin, may take courage from it, and secure for yourselves the light and liberty which HIS true children alone enjoy. "*Though ye have lain among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.*"

## SERMON XII.

### MADNESS.

[THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.]

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I am not mad.—Acts xxvi; *part of 25th verse.*

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EARLY on Sunday morning, September 30th, 1770, the most distinguished pulpit orator of the last century, died in Newberryport, Massachusetts. It was GEORGE WHITEFIELD.

Three days before, he had preached his last sermon, in a little village of Maine, wearing, as he always did when he discharged any public office of the ministry, his clerical robes.\*

With all his eccentricities of character, and his irregularities in ecclesiastical practice, he was one of those devoted clergymen whom the church may claim as "a bright and shining light."

For thirty-four years he had preached with unction and marvellous power; travelling from continent to continent, like a flaming sword, and turning thousands of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

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\* Sprague's Annals, vol. i., p. 107.

So far as the world regards such matters, it was a dismal thing to die, as he did, three thousand miles from his native land, and with no kinsmen nor dear friend to close his eyes.

After all, however, had his life been a failure? or was he, in any sense, a madman?

When Whitefield preached his first sermon, the congregation were so aroused by his stirring eloquence, that some alarmists went to good Dr. Benson, the Bishop of Gloucester, and complained, that the young Boanerges had driven fifteen of his hearers to madness! The mild old man answered, with a smile, that his only wish was that these persons might not get over it before the next Sunday!

Greater and better men than Whitefield have been accused of being mad themselves, and of making others so.

Need I remind you that the prejudiced Jews once said even of our Blessed LORD, "HE hath a devil, and is mad?" [St. John x: 20].

St. Paul was called mad, in the judgment-hall of Cesarea.

His masterly eloquence seemed to Festus, the effect of an excited imagination, and he fancied that the apostle had been poring too long over "the books and parchments" [2d Tim. iv: 13], which he seemed to set so much store by. Hence, the grievous interruption of his speech, in a tone of banter, "Paul, thou art beside thyself! Much learning doth make thee mad!"

No more happy turn could possibly have been

made, than that which the prisoner gave to the charge. He might, very properly, have appealed to the cogency and correctness of his reasoning, as evidence of his soundness of mind; but, instead of this, he turned abruptly to King Agrippa, who had spent many years in this region, and who was familiar with the history of our SAVIOUR'S life and death, and with St. Paul's own wonderful conversion, and made him a witness of his sanity.

The same charge of madness has often been brought against Christians, and that, too, with as little foundation in fact.

When William Carey mentioned to his father that he had about made up his mind to become a missionary, his father said, "William, are you mad?" It seemed to him an enterprise so visionary, that no one in his sober senses would think of engaging in it.

At this distance of time, when we look back and see what this single missionary accomplished in the unpromising field of heathenism, we are better prepared to decide which was the wise, and which the madman; William Carey, or his astonished father.

Zealous devotion of mind and heart, to the one great purpose which should most engage the attention of an immortal being, is regarded by the votaries of the world as sheer fanaticism—a fanaticism which falls little short of insanity.

The child of GOD may always answer, boldly and decidedly, as St. Paul did, under like circumstances, "*I am not mad!*"

Indeed, so far from being in this deplorable condi-

tion which is charged upon him, the Christian gives the best possible evidence of his sanity. Sinners have only returned to soundness of mind, when, like the repentant prodigal, they resolve to go back to their FATHER'S house.

A Christian may fairly appeal to those who laugh at his incredulity, or pity his weakness, and ask, "Are you so well satisfied with your present condition, and your prospects for the future, as to advise me to give up my hope in the SAVIOUR, and to become what you claim to be?"

Hume, the English historian, not satisfied with holding infidel notions himself, spared no pains to sap the foundations of his mother's religious belief. After a painful struggle, she yielded to his unwearied efforts, and gave up her hope in CHRIST, which had hitherto been an anchor to her soul.

Having succeeded in this dreadful work, the unnatural son fancied he had accomplished a great achievement, but it was one which was to cost him after misery.

He was absent from London when the poor woman found herself in a deep decline, and, in this extremity, she wrote a melancholy letter to the author of her misery, telling him that she was left without any ground of comfort, and that he had taken away what had before been her support in seasons of affliction and trouble.

All that philosophical skepticism can do is to restore the sting to death, and to give again victory to the grave.

It needs no argument to prove that the Christian is

not mad. The conclusion which follows from this position is, that all who are not trying to serve God, and to be ready to meet HIM at the judgment, *are* so. Such a charge may be startling to one who belongs to this unfortunate class, and he may be disposed to deny it with vehemence and wrath.

He is not mad; not he! He is one of your wise Grecians, to whom the Gospel of God is foolishness. He has, as he feels assured, a well-balanced mind, and he quotes with much self-complacency, that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush!" It would be simply absurd, according to his estimate of things, to give up possession for the sake of reversion.

He is one of your strong and vigorous natures, to whom prayer and devotion are but melancholy breath, fit only for women and children, and the weaker sort of men; your frenzied poets, your Milton, and Cowper, and Shakspeare; for your star-gazers, your mad mathematicians, your Paschal and Newton; for your hair-splitting metaphysicians, your John Locke, and for others like him. No, no! he is the very soul of honor, and has no need of repentance; no need of the blood of Calvary; but that of his enemies will take away every possible stain!

He, at least, is not such stuff as dreams are made of. "Away, then, to Paradise, with your missionaries and preachers, and leave this world for him to manage, and to bustle in!" Such would be the language of his lips, if it were politic, or safe, to utter it.

Alas! my brother, for your claims to soundness of mind, when these vagaries possess you.



In a few short years, at the most, the places which now know you, will know you no more forever.

The coffins piled up in the ware-room of the undertaker, and the hearse as it moves along the busy streets, are preaching to us of death. We are traveling onward towards eternity, millions of ages, as countless as the sands on the sea shore, which will be either happy or miserable, accordingly as we ourselves have made them so. A wicked man, with low, depraved tastes, would not enjoy heaven any more than he does the services in church; and hence, if he expects to dwell forever with saints, and angels, and with the spirits of the just made perfect, he must acquire a relish for purity and goodness now.

Thousands claim to *live* as unbelievers, but it is rarely the case that they are willing to *die* so.

From how many agonized breasts has been wrung the dreadful confession: "*I am afraid the Bible is true!*"

Voltaire, who had been as bold and unblushing in his infidelity as any one, so long as health lasted, found it cold comfort in death.

In spite of the crowd of skeptics who flocked about him, during the first days of his illness, to encourage him to be steadfast in his principles, he gave unmistakable signs of wishing to return to that GOD whom he had so often blasphemed. He called for the priest; he bewailed his folly and wickedness, and even signed a renunciation of his infidelity, in the presence of reliable witnesses. The wretched man cursed the boon companions who held the same views which he had claimed to believe, and as they turned with disgust

from his bedside, they could hear him, the prey of anguish and dread, alternately supplicating and blaspheming God.

At one time his attendant discovered him with a book of prayers, in his trembling hand, endeavoring, with faltering tongue, to repeat some of the petitions for mercy; and, at another, having fallen from the bed in convulsive agonies, he cried out in tones of despair: "Will not this GOD, whom I have denied, save me, too? Cannot infinite mercy extend to me?"

His physician who came in to administer relief, was thunderstruck, declaring, as he quitted the apartment, that a death-scene like that was too terrible to witness.

Indeed, such were the horrors of mind in which this professed infidel, who had branded Christians as madmen, quitted the world, that the nurse who attended him, being afterwards called on to wait upon another sick person, positively refused, until assured that he was not a philosopher.

The death of Paine was almost a repetition of the scene which has just been described. Although, as the end approached, he endeavored to stupify his senses with spirituous liquors, there were moments of agony when an accusing conscience would make itself heard, and he cried aloud, in his paroxysms of distress, "O LORD, help me! JESUS CHRIST help me!"

Let the neglecter of religion ponder these things, and be wise. I am sure that "I am not mad," when I urge it upon him to have some regard for the welfare of his soul.

When the book of God's remembrance is opened, on the great day of final account, and when the lot of each of us will depend upon the deeds done in the body, who will be sorry that he has tried to lead a Christian life?

**"Hasten, sinner, to be blest;**

**Stay not for the morrow's sun;**

**Lest perdition thee arrest,**

**Ere the morrow is begun."**

## SERMON XIII.

### THE TWO POSSESSED WITH DEMONS.

[FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.]

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There met HIM two possessed with Devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce.—ST. MATTHEW viii: *part of 28th verse.*

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SOME strange and startling things are told us, in the Gospel for the day, concerning the Devil and his doings. The subject is especially appropriate to the season of the Epiphany, when we thank the ALMIGHTY FATHER because HIS blessed SON was manifested, "that HE might destroy the works of the Devil."

Our SAVIOUR, leaving Capernaum, at even-tide, to escape the ever-thronging multitude, turned HIS course southeasterly, towards Gergesa. As the little vessel, in which HE and the disciples had embarked, pursued its way, the MASTER, wearied with the labors of the day, had fallen asleep. A sudden storm arose, and threatened to overwhelm them, when HE who can command the winds and the waves, calmed the angry sea, in a moment, by HIS word.

Early on the next morning, the blessed company landed upon the coast of Gergesa, a short distance

south of the city. The SAVIOUR's first greeting, as He reached these quiet shores, was of a peculiar and alarming nature.

Two miserable demoniacs, banished from the abodes of men, had made their dwelling in one of those natural caverns, or recesses hewn by the hand of art, which are used by the Jews as places for the interment of the dead.

I pause for a moment, to notice a discrepancy in the narratives of the Evangelists. St. Matthew mentions two demoniacs; while St. Mark and St. Luke only speak of one. The most probable explanation is that there were, indeed, two; but that one was more prominent than the other, either as being the fiercer of the two, or as the one best known. That the silence of St. Mark and St. Luke respecting one of the unfortunate creatures, does not exclude him, may be thus illustrated:—

“In the year 1824, Lafayette visited the United States, and was everywhere welcomed with honors and pageants. Historians will describe these as a noble incident in his life. Other writers will relate the same visit as made, and the same honors as enjoyed, by two persons, viz., Lafayette and his son. Will there be any contradiction between these two classes of writers? Will not both record the truth?”\*

To resume the thread of the narrative. One of the wretched demoniacs was possessed of uncommon strength, and had rendered the road which led near

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\* Robinson's Harmony of the Gospels, p. 195.

his dreary habitation, well nigh impossible for travellers, by rushing out upon them, and threatening them with violence. When the little fishing boat touched the land, and the SAVIOUR and HIS apostles had set foot thereon, the two mad creatures came forth from the portals of the cave, as if to challenge the bold intruders who thus presumed to approach their dismal dwelling.

A mysterious awe creeps over one, while reading the wonderful narrative. How terrible such glimpses of the unseen world!

Perhaps these poor creatures may have been instinctively drawn towards our blessed LORD, as one who had power to help. However this may have been, all thought of offering personal violence to *these* travellers quickly passed away; for the SAVIOUR who has power over all things, "had commanded the unclean spirit to come out." [St. Luke viii: 29].

The demon evidently recognized the Divine authority of HIM who spake; for he cried with a loud voice, "What have I to do with THEE, JESUS, THOU Son of the Most High GOD? I adjure THEE, by GOD, that THOU torment me not. Art THOU come hither to torment us before the time?"

A plain acknowledgment, indeed, that the day is at hand when the Son of GOD shall have gained a complete triumph over all the powers of darkness, and when the Devil and his evil angels, and those who have taken sides with him, shall be cast into the lake of fire. [1st Cor. vi: 3; St. Jude vi; Rev. xx: 10]. Although JESUS had commanded the evil spirits to

leave their victim, they were reluctant to obey, and the poor man was thrown into a paroxysm of agony.

His gracious Deliverer then asked him his name, doubtless with a view of calming and soothing him, and of bringing back the consciousness of his own personality, which had well nigh been lost sight of, through the debasing influences of the demons by whom he was possessed. There was a most painful confusion in the poor madman's mind, and the evil spirits had rendered him miserable in the extreme, and, we may well say, *savage*.

Before he could tell JESUS what his name was, and perhaps even before he could recollect it, the demon answered for him, "My name is Legion, for we are many." Thus, no time was left the man to recover himself, and to realize what his condition once had been, before he had thus been overmastered by the inhabitants of Hell. And then the man said to JESUS, or rather the demons oblige him to say, "If THOU cast us out, suffer us to go into the herd of swine, and drive us not out into the deep."

A large herd of these unclean creatures, (St. Mark, who is accurate in statistics, mentions that there were *two thousand*), were feeding upon the steep slopes of the adjacent mountains.

The keepers and owners of the swine were probably Jews, who ventured to brave the authority of God's law; and were fattening them for the market; in which case, the loss of the herd would be a signal judgment upon them.

The demons, knowing that they must submit to the command of JESUS, and leave the body of their victim, and feeling, at the same time, an irresistible desire to do mischief to something, made the singular request just mentioned.

And how did our SAVIOUR treat this petition, which, though spoken by the man, was prompted by the demons which possessed him? Did HE say, as some wise people in our day would have done; "Nay, my poor friend, this idea of yours is all mere imagination! There are no evil spirits *in* you, and, of course, none can *go forth* into the herd of swine. You need a tonic for you shattered nerves, and nursing, and quiet, and you will soon recover from this uncomfortable delusion!"

Did our blessed LORD speak after this manner? Nay; HE regarded the man's own impressions of the case as the true solution of it, and when the request was made that HE would permit the demons to enter into the herd, HE said, "Go!"

The evil spirits seem to have had no thought that they would thus defeat their own purposes, by destroying the lives of these creatures, for when this refuge was lost to them, they would be obliged to return to the gloomy realms from which they had broken loose. It is most likely that the bewildered brutes finding themselves affected in so strange a way, were seized with a panic, and rushed down headlong, from the precipitous side of the mountain, into the watery depths below



By permitting all this to come to pass, our SAVIOUR not only rescued the poor demoniac from the grasp of his cruel tormentor, but HE said, in effect, to the astonished spectators of the scene, and to us, in this age of unbelief, "You may sneer and scoff as you please, but this unhappy man has only spoken the truth. He *is* tormented by demons. I *can* drive them out, and so I will." And, accordingly, so HE did.

It is worse than absurd for infidel writers of our day, to attempt to palm off such portions of the New Testament as that which has now occupied our attention, as describing cases of insanity, or epilepsy, or other kindred diseases. The language which our SAVIOUR always used, on such occasions, shows how HE regarded it. If the modern infidel theory be correct, would JESUS have said to the evil spirit, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him?" [St. Mark i: 25].

Would HE invariably have addressed HIMSELF as to a *person*, who could hear, and answer, and obey?

This world of ours, and we who inhabit it, have certain relations to a higher and better one, and also, to a lower one, which is degraded and evil. The wicked world is under the dominion of Satan and his countless host, and this prince of darkness is ever on the alert to accomplish our destruction. And thus it comes to pass, that constant intercourse is kept up between our world and these evil spirits, and it is a sad pity for us that such should be the case.

The unhappy persons, of whom we read in the Gospels, over whom the Devil had gained control, were

most properly regarded as being *possessed* by him. The will of the wretched victim was made subservient to the will of the evil spirit which had gained the upper hand of him.

Even down to this period of time, the same Prince of darkness is busy at his work, and waging war with all that is good and true; but the object of our SAVIOUR'S coming in the flesh, was to cripple him in these designs, and finally, to destroy him. "We believe that his rage and violence are continually hemmed in and hindered by the preaching of the Word, and ministration of the Sacraments. It were another thing, even now, in a heathen land, especially in one where Satan was not left in undisturbed possession, but wherein the great crisis of the conflict between light and darkness was finding place through the first incoming there of the Gospel of CHRIST. There we shall expect very much to find, whether or not in such great intensity, yet manifestations analogous to these in the Gospels. There is a very interesting communication from Rhenius, the Lutheran missionary, in which he gives this as exactly his experience in India, that among the native Christians, even though many of them walk not as children of light, yet there is not this falling under Satanic influence in soul and body, which he traced frequently in the heathen around him; and he shows by a remarkable example, and one in which he is himself the witness throughout, how the assault in the name of JESUS on the kingdom of darkness, as it brings out all forms of devilish opposition into fiercest activity, so

calls out the endeavor to counterwork the truth through men who have been made direct organs of the devilish will.”\*

It is no unusual thing, in countries claiming to be Christian, to meet with persons so crooked and perverse; so unaccountably strange and unreasonable, that the only charitable construction to be put upon their conduct is that which we describe by the word *possessed*, meaning by it, that they are under the direct influence of the Devil. And ought we to wonder that such instances do occur? Satan is still lording it over this world, although, thank GOD, not to the extent that he once did, and we can take courage, because we see that his power is constantly on the wane.

It would be very pleasant and consoling to believe that he had already been driven from the world, and that he and his, were securely confined by bolts and bars, in that bottomless pit, to which they will one day go; but we know that this is not the case. Hence, the Bible so often warns us to be constantly on the watch, lest we be overtaken by his cunning arts.

At our baptism, when we enlisted as soldiers of CHRIST, one of the most dangerous enemies against whom we were exhorted to be mindful, was the Devil, and as he has practised his devices for six thousand years, it is but reasonable to suppose that he has reached great perfection in them. He has vast hordes of imps continually tempting people to sin. The spirit of the evil world is his active agent to allure

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\* Trench's Notes on the Miracles, p. 135.

them into the snares of worldliness; unclean spirits prepare for them occasions of filthiness; lying spirits encourage them to falsehood; the spirit of pride tempts them to sinful self-exaltation; and so on, through all the varying shades of evil.

Well, therefore, may St. Paul call upon us to "resist the Devil," and never to give place to him for a moment. [Ephes. iv: 27].

That man is certainly opening wide the gates of his heart to the evil one, who associates, freely and willingly, with those of corrupt minds; or who devotes too much time to worldly things; or who indulges in angry feelings, and malice, and revenge.

Let those who have hitherto been disposed to make light of this Scriptural view of the great enemy whom we have all the utmost reason to dread, rather unite with us in the earnest supplication, that God, of His mercy, would bring to nought "those evils which the craft and subtlety of the Devil worketh against us," and that "finally we may beat down Satan under our feet."

As the evil spirits who possessed the poor man at Gadara, declared that their name was "LEGION," so are we required to contend with foes, many and mighty; and woe be to him who tries to persuade himself that there is no Devil; or, what will prove equally fatal, that he has no occasion to fear him.

## SERMON XIV.

### THE TARES AND THE WHEAT.

[FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.]

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Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.—ST. MATTHEW, xiii: 30.

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WITH our SAVIOUR'S own interpretation to guide us, there need be no difficulty in arriving at the true meaning of the Parable connected with the text.

Our blessed LORD was at Capernaum; the time was autumn, and it was the same day as that on which HIS mother and brethren visited HIM, and on which HE healed the blind and dumb-possessed.

An eager crowd besieged the house, in which the SAVIOUR taught the people, and replied to the captious objections of the Scribes and Pharisees. HE had testified of HIMSELF both in word and deed, and HIS delivery of Parables, calculated to convey to the multitude a clearer conception of HIS character and claims, marked an onward step in HIS ministry. That all who chose, might have the privilege of hearing the word,

our SAVIOUR left the house, and followed by the throng, proceeded to the shore of the lake, hard by. Entering a fisher's boat, which was to serve as a pulpit, the willing hands of one of the disciples soon pushed it off a short distance from the land, while the people arranged themselves on the shelving sides of the mountain.

When all were hushed in silence, our LORD, perchance, saw in a neighboring field, an industrious husbandman, scattering seed upon the ground which had been carefully prepared to receive it, and as HIS custom was, HE made this familiar scene the text of His sermon.

"Behold, a sower went forth to sow," [St. Matt. xiii: 3]; thus the DIVINE PREACHER began. "There is a nice and close adherence to actual life, in this form of expression," as one familiar with Eastern customs, tells us. "It implies that the sower, in the days of our SAVIOUR, lived in a hamlet, or village; that he did not sow near his own house, or in a garden fenced or walled, for such a field does not furnish all the basis of the parable. There are neither *roads*, nor thorns, nor stony places in such lots. He must *go forth* into the open country where there are no fences; where the path passes through the cultivated land; where thorns grow in clumps all around; where the rocks peep out in places through the scanty soil; and where, also, hard by, are patches extremely fertile." [The Land and Book, vol. i., pp. 115-16]. With this brief explanation, we go on with the parable. "The Kingdom of Heaven is likened unto a man who sowed good

seed in his field." [xiii: 24]. Our LORD adds, in HIS explanation afterwards, "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man." [v: 37].

What a touching spectacle, for men and angels, when the SON of the Most High GOD, came down from heaven, not to condemn the world, but to proclaim pardon and peace, to the ungrateful race which had rebelled against HIM.

In the days of HIS sojourn upon earth, the SAVIOUR HIMSELF sowed the good seed. Now, HE performs the same office, by the labors of HIS ministers, by the dispensations of HIS providence, and by the manifold operations of the HOLY SPIRIT.

The sea of Galilee lies among the silent hills, visited only now and then, by travellers from far off lands; but the GREAT HUSBANDMAN who, eighteen hundred years ago, sat in the fisher's boat, and spake as never man spake, has sent forth HIS servants, unto the very ends of the earth, scattering the good seed; and the promise will be fulfilled, in the case of the humblest of them all, "He who now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him." [Psalm cxxvi: 7].

"The field is the *World*." [v: 38]. How enlarged and comprehensive the plan, which GOD, in mercy, has provided for our redemption, and restoration to HIS favor! One nation can no longer set up the lofty claim of being HIS peculiar people. The temple at Jerusalem has ceased to be regarded as the only place "where men ought to worship." [St. John iv: 20.]

The command has been given, by that Prince and Saviour, to whom all power in earth and heaven belongs, "Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*." [St. Mark xvi: 15].

"While men slept," our SAVIOUR goes on with the parable, "his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat." [25]. By *tares* we are to understand a degenerate sort of wheat, or the "darnel grass," of Palestine.

"In passing through the fertile country of the ancient Philistines," says a modern traveller in Bible lands, "I asked the guide, one day, a native Syrian, if he knew of a plant which was apt to make its appearance among the wheat, and which resembled it so much that it could hardly be distinguished from it. He replied that it was very common, and that he would soon show me a specimen of it. Soon after this he pointed out to me some of this grass, growing near our path; and afterwards, having once seen it, I found it in almost every field where I searched for it. Except that the stalk was not so high, it appeared otherwise precisely like wheat, just as the ears begin to show themselves, and the kernels are swelling out into shape. . . . I collected some specimens of this deceitful weed, and have found, on showing them to friends, that they have mistaken them quite invariably for some species of grain, such as wheat or barley." [Hackett's Illustrations of Scripture, p. 138].

In this curious fact that the wheat and tares, spoken of in the parable, are not seeds of different kinds, but the tares (as we have already explained) being an in-



ferior or degenerate kind of wheat, we are reminded of an important truth. The Devil has no power to create children of darkness, but he accomplishes his foul purposes by *spoiling children of light*. Thus the origin of evil is revealed to us. "It is not a generation, but a degeneration," or, as St. Augustine expresses it, "It has not an *efficient*, but only a *deficient* cause."

As in scattering the good seed, subordinate agents are now employed by GOD, so, in the case of the tares, the arch-deceiver has his assistants, too.

"The enemy that sowed the tares is the Devil." [39]. Active and industrious as he is, he cannot accomplish all the mischief by himself. False prophets, and false teachers are ever busy in the world; and the danger to be apprehended from such foes is all the greater, because, in so many respects, they bear the marks of sincerity and truth.

Although Satan inspires the whole multitude of his agents, his presence and influence are not always detected; and this is not to be wondered at, when we are told that he has power, when it serves his purpose, to "transform himself into an angel of light." [2d Cor. xi: 14].

Having scattered tares in the newly-sown wheat-field, the enemy went his way.

The Devil understands, full well, the nature of the soil, whose crop of good he wishes to destroy. Hypocrisy, and error, and every wrong desire, will grow rife and rampant, while one little virtue is struggling for existence, in this dry and flinty bed. The enemy

need but sow the tares, and the seeds of evil will require no further care. Days passed on, and no one discovered what mischief had been done. And so in the great field, "the world," in which GOD's word is scattered broad cast, how long it is before we learn that this or that symptom of coming ill, will grow to any size; or that the swelling root will send up a thrifty stalk, and spread forth, at last, into the stately, fruit-bearing tree! Errors in faith and practice which once excited no alarm, may increase and strengthen, until they become, in their evil influence over individuals, and the Church, as poisonous and deadly, as the most excited imagination ever represented the fabled Upas.

"So the servants of the house-holder came and said unto him, Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? From whence then hath it tares?" [27].

The earnest Christian as he compares that perfect Church which fancy paints for him, with the strange mixture of good and bad, which meets his eye within the fold of CHRIST, often adopts the spirit of this inquiry, in his anxiety to comprehend a truth so curious and so deplorable. He must remember, however, that the Church is yet militant below, yet waging a warfare with the powers of darkness; and in every case where he may be disposed to think that some defect in her system has produced the unfortunate result, he may hear the DIVINE MASTER say, in explanation of it, "An enemy hath done this!" Satan and his emissaries, disguised, perhaps, under the name and garb

of goodness and purity, have scattered these dangerous tares.

"The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?" [29].

Here is a striking example of that unwise zeal which, in haste to destroy the evil, endangers also the good.

All those severe and final judgments passed by men upon offending and fallen brethren, are pointedly rebuked. Gentleness and long-suffering mark all of God's doings *now*; the day of final settlement has not come.

Hence, the house-holder's prompt reply: "Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest." [29-30]. It is plain from this, that evil is not wholly to disappear before the good; but that both will remain mingled together until the last.

"In the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." [30]. Lest the conclusion should be drawn from this language that the wicked will finally be destroyed, and so an end be put to their wretchedness, our SAVIOUR in explaining the parable afterwards to the disciples, changes the metaphor.

"The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." [41-2]. They will "wail" at

the remembrance of opportunities lost, and in the consciousness of miseries of body and mind which they then endure; while they will "gnash their teeth" with vexation and self-reproaches at their own short-sighted presumption; pouring out bitter imprecations upon the companions of their wretchedness, by whose evil influence and example they have been brought to this dreadful end, and blaspheming "the name of God, who hath power over these plagues." [Rev. xvi: 9].

A merciful SAVIOUR would never make use of these terrible images, to turn us from the ways of sin, if no such punishments were in store for stubborn and impenitent transgressors; and the truth of HIS words will one day be realized by many, when too late for repentance. May GOD save us from that portion!

If the happiness of the righteous had been merely described as the treasuring up of wheat in the garner, our ideas on the subject would be confused and incomplete.

Here, again, our LORD has altered the figure: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their FATHER." [43].

All the defilements of sin, and all the infirmities of the flesh will be forever removed. Every cloud which obscured their vision, and diminished their enjoyment, will be driven away. The SAVIOUR, and all HIS shining ones shall come, and the righteous shall rise up from the grave to meet HIM; their raiment white and glistening as HIS, when HE stood upon the Mount of Transfiguration.

The most cursory reader of this parable, must be struck with the evidence of GOD's patience and long-suffering, as set forth in it. "Let both grow together until the harvest."

In attempting any immediate severance between the good and the bad, there would not only be a risk of mistaking the one for the other; but the relations between them are often so close and intimate, that such a separation would be almost impossible. And so our XXVIth Article of Religion lays it down as a point beyond dispute, that "in the visible Church, the evil is ever mingled with the good."

Among the faithful at Samaria was found the infamous Simon Magus; in the Church of Pergamos were those "who held the doctrine of Balaam," [Rev. ii: 14]; the Bishop of the Church in Sardis was blamed because he had not dealt more severely with such as had only a name to live, while they were really dead; aye, even in the small band of our LORD's twelve Apostles was the traitor Judas.

So it has always been, and so it will continue to be, until "the harvest." St. Paul gives the reason for this delay, when he asks, "Despisest thou the riches of GOD's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of GOD leadeth thee to repentance?" [Romans ii: 4].

All this, however, will only be for a season. "HE hath appointed a day, in the which HE will judge the world in righteousness." [Acts xvii: 31].

The time when a final separation between true and false professors will be made, is drawing near.

What an important question for each one to determine, whether or not he is reckoned among the evil or the good; whether he is now preparing, like the tares, for the burning; or like the wheat, to be gathered into the heavenly garner!

It is said that the waters of the Missouri and Columbia Rivers have their origin, in little springs, on the top of the Rocky Mountains, only a few yards from each other. As the rain descends upon that lofty point, the slightest breath of air, from either east or west, determines on which side the drops shall fall, and whether they shall help to swell the streams and rivers which find their way to the broad Pacific; or pouring down the mountain's eastern slope, rush onward for hundreds of miles, in the opposite direction. At their beginning, how near to each other, and how much alike; but in their end, how widely and permanently separated!

And such is the actual condition of all those whose decision in regard to religion has not been made. They are standing, this day, as it were, on some lofty summit, and the slightest influence, for good or for evil, may determine their portion for eternity!

## SERMON XV.

### MODERN SPIRITUALISM.

[SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.]

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There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination; or a consulter with familiar spirits; or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD.—DEUT. xviii: 10, 11, 12.

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OVERWEENING curiosity has never been satisfied to confine itself to the limits within which its investigations may be properly exercised. Standing on tip-toe, it has ventured, oftentimes, with its blurred and short-sighted vision, to peer beyond the narrow boundaries of time, into the far-off region, untrodden by the most adventurous footsteps of mortals.

The race of wizzards, and diviners, and fortune-tellers, has been a long one; and people of all nations, and in all ages, have been made their willing dupes.

Of the various branches of these black arts, that of Necromancy, or the power of revealing hidden knowledge, by consulting the spirits of the dead, is one of the oldest and most dangerous. Its origin (which can be traced far back beyond historic times) may be

referred to the custom of offering sacrifices to the dead, which implied some sort of intercourse between this world and another; and was, no doubt, encouraged by the Pagan priests, with a view to increase their power over the ignorant and superstitious.

We need not go beyond the stringent provisions of the law of Moses (an example of which has just been read in the text) to find evidence how extensively Necromancy, and other magical arts were practised among the nations of the East.

Not only does the ALMIGHTY express HIS disapproval and abhorrence of these things; but the Prophet Isaiah denounces those who sleep upon tombs, with a view to holding communion with the departed through the agency of dreams.

Upon the establishment of the Christian religion, the occupation of such as professed to disclose the secrets of another world, was placed under the ban of the Church. Now, even more emphatically than in the days of Moses, does the LORD declare, "*There shall not be found among you any one that useth divination, or a consulter of familiar spirits, or a necromancer; for all that do these things are an abomination unto ME.*"

It is a mortifying fact, that our own enlightened age and country, afford the most frequent and the most flagrant violations of this commandment. May God open the eyes of the nation to the enormity of the sin, before fresh vials of HIS wrath be poured out upon us!

So long as the advocates of modern Spiritualism contented themselves with ordinary experiments, the secret of which could be explained by the laws of



magnetism, it was a matter hardly worth a moment's uneasiness, and might be very properly left to run its course. When, however, we are gravely told that our own friends and neighbors, by raps, and writing, and other modes of communication, are holding frequent and unrestrained intercourse with departed spirits; and even a childish toy\* becomes an object of superstitious wonder, it is certainly the duty of every Christian minister who wishes well to his people, to give them a kindly warning.

If communications *can* be held with souls in another state of being, then, it is absurd to try to account for it by saying that it is owing to certain natural causes, easily understood. A *spiritual* cause is the only one which will meet the case. The question, then, is narrowed down to this; are the spirits which thus hold intercourse with man, *good* or *bad*? In other words, are they of God, or of the Devil?

No one in his senses will deny that very curious things are done by Spiritualism.

I must, however, very frankly say, that so far as there is any reality in it, I believe it to be one of the Devil's devices.

That the Prince of Darkness has, in times past, exercised a marvellous control over the affairs of this world, every reader of the Bible knows full well. He certainly possesses as much power now as he ever did, and he can act upon the bodies and spirits of human beings in a very mysterious way.

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\* Planchette.

As for proof concerning the past, take the case of Job. Here, we find the Devil empowered to test the sincerity of a good man, by the sudden loss of property and children; and, not only so, but the same Evil Spirit is seen to have used Job's own acquaintances as his tools; aye, the winds, and the fire from heaven, help him to accomplish the general ruin.

All this time, while the Devil is the real actor, he remains *unseen*, and even *unsuspected*.

Now, if he is permitted (as he assuredly was in this case) to control, to a certain extent, the winds and the lightning, it would not require much faith to believe that he can move a chair, or a table, when it pleases him to do so. Moreover, if the Devil could, almost in a moment, produce upon Job's healthy body, sore and loathsome boils, can we doubt that he has power to cause a living hand to hold a pen, and to write words, with which the mind of the instrument has no connection?

The name, *Modern Spiritualism*, is not applicable to the system of which I have been speaking. It is nothing more nor less than the ancient possession of devils, again making itself *conspicuous* and *generally felt*.

Besides the case of Job, other examples of like kind might be brought forward from the Bible, such as the mysterious influence excited by evil spirits over the wretched Saul; the witch of Endor, and the appearance of the Prophet Samuel; but the single instance already cited will suffice.

The history of Job establishes the fact that GOD *has* permitted the Devil to exercise a power over man, and there is no reason for supposing that HE might not allow it again.

All Christians profess to believe that the Holy Scriptures contain the *final* and *complete* revelation of GOD's will to the human race.

Now, if the disclosures of Spiritualism really supply anything which it is important for us to know, with reference to another world, then, the Bible cannot be considered as complete. The believers in Spiritualism insist that they *can* learn something of the future state, over and above what is revealed in GOD's word. They are very careful to say that they do not reject the Bible; but, at the same time, they deny that it is to be considered as cutting us off from all sources of information in regard to such questions as I have named.

And, what is this, forsooth, but taking the very ground which the Devil has occupied from the beginning?

Unless the doctrine which has everywhere been held that the word of GOD is HIS final revelation to us, what shall prevent us from looking beyond the Bible for light and guidance; and why may not infidelity, by the help of the Evil One, establish any denial of the Faith, upon the same basis as the Scriptures themselves, for aught that human reason is able to determine, concerning its utterances, or its proofs?

The Prince of Darkness is too well skilled in strategy, to allow his personal interference to be dis-

cerned, in the operations of Spiritualism. He has an important object to accomplish; *the undermining our faith in the Bible*; and, therefore, he proceeds with the caution and craft which have always marked his course. On the face of modern Spiritualism, there may be little to alarm, but all its disclosures are tending to this one end, the most determined and deadly opposition to the word of God.

It is no sufficient answer to this grave charge to say that this cannot be the case, because many professing Christians are believers in it. This melancholy fact proves exactly the reverse. Our BLESSED LORD anticipated and answered such objections, when HE said, "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is CHRIST! or, Lo, HE is there! believe them not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, *and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch, that if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*" [St. Matt. xxiv: 23, &c].

Even those persons who might not be prepared to agree with me, to the full extent of believing the operations of Spiritualism to be instigated and carried on, by the contrivance of the Devil, must still acknowledge that the communications which are represented to come from the world of spirits, bear their own refutation, in nearly every word and sentiment. In the midst of the spirits, summoned to hold communion with us, by raps, and writing, we find ourselves in no such pure and holy society, such as St. John beheld in his vision; redeemed through the blood of the LAMB; but a mixed multitude of self-conceited crea-

tures who make mock at the Bible doctrines of the fall of man, and of our native depravity of heart; who insist that the DIVINE REDEEMER was a mere mortal, and that HE offered no atoning sacrifice for our sins; that HE never wrought miracles, nor rose from the dead; and who would persuade us (the boldest and most alluring of all the Devil's arts) that there is no such place as Hell, and that there will be no future punishment.

If any other proof were needed, that these utterances of Spiritualism (so far as they are real, at all) are utterances of the Evil One, we have it in this; that they do not harmonize with one another; but represent every varying shade of opinion, whether political or religious, which prevails upon the earth.

There is one plain conclusion to be drawn from our SAVIOUR's parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, which puts the whole question of our being able to receive warnings and instructions *now*, from spirits beyond the grave, finally at rest. The rich man, in torment, besought, in piteous words, that a messenger might be sent to tell his surviving brethren of his hopeless and wretched lot, and to urge them to repent.

The prompt and decisive answer was returned, that his petition was all in vain, and that no messenger can cross the wide and yawning gulf, which divides the world of spirits from that which living men inhabit.

If *any* motive could prompt the ALMIGHTY to allow such communications to be made, it would be mercy; and yet even *mercy* did not in this prevail. How worse than absurd, then, to pretend that intercourse

with good spirits can be kept up, on less important subjects!

Well may we all give heed to the Apostle's counsel, and exercise ourselves in godliness, rather than lend an ear, for a moment, to "seducing spirits," and "doctrines of devils," [1st Tim. lxxiv: 1]; come in what shape they may.

It is my earnest hope, that none over whose everlasting welfare the LORD has appointed me to watch, will, henceforth, have anything to do with Spiritualism, either to gratify curiosity, or for any other cause.

The faith of many good people has been shaken and unsettled by tampering with these unlawful things, and not a few have become hopelessly mad.

It is well for us always to remember that GOD does not promise to keep even HIS own children safe from temptation, when they recklessly rush into it. Granting, also, that no evil consequences should result in your own case; who can tell how many, less strong and settled in the faith, may, by your example, in attending the exhibitions of spiritualists, be lured to destruction.

The truth is, we must all make our choice, between the system of the blessed Gospel of our LORD and SAVIOUR, and the system of spiritual manifestations; for the two cannot for any long time be held together.

When the Jewish exorcists were convinced of their wrong-doings; as a proof of their sincerity, and to prevent all possibility of going back to forbidden pursuits, they burned their magical books.

It would make me happy to think that all who are listening to these words of friendly counsel would, this very day, give like evidence that they are anxious to please GOD. Remember, my friends, that it is no fellow-mortal whose opinions might, perchance, be ill-founded, and needlessly severe, who utters the warning, but the **ALMIGHTY ONE HIMSELF** who declares that those who venture to hold converse with familiar spirits, and try to draw aside the veil which hides the secrets of another world from mortal vision, are an abomination unto **HIM!**

## SERMON XVI.

### THE SABBATH A DELIGHT.

[SEPTUAGESIMA.]

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If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.—ISAIAH lviii. 13, 14.

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THE emphatic "If," with which the text begins, is one of the "pivot words" of Holy Scripture, and a most important promise hinges on it.

"I never knew a man to escape failures, in either mind or body," says the matter-of-fact Sir Robert Peel, "who worked seven days in a week."

Summer would not be more cheerless without flowers, than the world without the blessing of the LORD'S Day. During six long days of anxiety and toil, we go down into the deep valleys of care and of shadow; but on the morning of the first day of the week, we shake off the sordidness of earth, and climb up to repose and to rejoice in the presence of God.



To keep alive the remembrance of the world's creation, and to lead men to acknowledge and worship the great BEING who made all things, the ALMIGHTY instituted the Sabbath, and the obligation to reverence this appointment will never cease, until these earthly Sabbaths give place to the eternal rest of heaven.

While the religion of the first inhabitants of the globe remained uncorrupt, this sacred season was duly observed, but as wickedness increased, the duty of honoring GOD's holy day was gradually lost sight of.

It was probably attended to, in a limited degree, for a few years after the flood, and may have been continued in some of the branches of the family of Abraham; but during the period of Egyptian bondage, the Israelites seem entirely to have forgotten it.

We know that the Sabbath was not instituted, for the first time, when the law was given on Mount Sinai, because the ALMIGHTY bids His people "*Remember*" the day, as one whose observance had long before been commanded. Indeed, the direction to keep it holy forms no part of the *ceremonial* law, which, in course of time, was to be set aside, but was given long before the ceremonial law had been announced; dating back even to the creation of the world.

As to the portion of time which GOD expects us to devote to His service, it must be acknowledged that while HE had a right to claim the larger portion, or even the whole of it, HE has been extremely liberal in allowing us to employ six days for our own pursuits, and only requiring one for HIMSELF.

The setting apart of any particular day of the week,

as a sacred season, is to be left also to His wisdom; and while the due amount of time is regarded as sacred to religious purposes, there is nothing inconsistent with the original institution of the Sabbath, that for some good reason, it should be changed from one day to another. The *seventh* day was fixed upon, at the beginning, in memory of the *creation*, but when the greater and more glorious work of man's *redemption* was completed by our LORD's resurrection on the *first* day of the week, was it not most fitting, that the Sabbath should be made to correspond with this, by being fixed upon the same day?

The royal psalmist, in prophetic words, speaking of CHRIST's resurrection, says: "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." [Ps. cxviii: 24]. It is not surprising, then, that from that time onward, it should have been observed and honored as "the LORD's Day." [Rev. i: 10]. On this day, the SAVIOUR often appeared to His disciples, as they were assembled for worship, [St. John xx: 26]; on this day, St. Paul preached at Troas, and at other places, and administered the Holy Communion, [Acts xx: 7]; and when giving directions concerning a collection to be made for suffering brethren, he mentions "the first day of the week," [1st Cor. xvi: 1-2], as the most convenient and suitable for the purpose.

There is no institution of our Heavenly FATHER better calculated to promote the happiness and well-being of His creatures than the appointment of the Sabbath. Once in each week, the wheels of worldly business stop, and all who have been for six weary

days engrossed with earthly cares, have time for bodily rest, and for attending to the wants of the soul.

The Christian, forced by hard necessity, and bound by the rules of the Gospel, to be diligent in his daily calling, welcomes this festival as a pleasant resting-place, in the dusty pathway of life, when he can worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness, and renew his strength for the toils of the coming week.

The careless sinner, who renders six days of uninterrupted service to those hard task-masters—the World and the Devil—is glad to enjoy this day of rest, and, often, through the blessing of GOD, on the appointed means of grace, it becomes to such “the day of *salvation*.”

The laboring classes, although many times forgetful of HIM who appointed the Sabbath, always hail its return, and even the brutes are remembered by the great CREATOR, in the fourth commandment, which is so plainly an emanation of HIS love.

To take GOD’s day for our work, or our pleasure, is down-right *robbery*. The point brought out so prominently in the text is the very way in which Sunday is most frequently violated. Most worldly people would prefer to close their stores, and work shops, and offices, on this day; but a large number of them insist on being left free to seek their own pleasure in a period of holy time which does not belong to them. Visits to friends in the country, and dinner-parties, and excursions by land or water, are certainly not proper modes of spending Sunday.

We ought not only to be honest in giving the LORD

the *day* which belongs to HIM, but not defraud HIM in the *number of hours*. Why should a man who attends to his own business, on Saturday, begin early, and keep on late, and fancy that he has honored Sunday, because he managed to get up in time to drag himself to the morning service? Shall our own working days last for twelve hours or more, and the LORD's day be cut down to one or two?

Parents ought not only to be regular in their attendance at public worship; but their children should be brought with them, and taught to bear their part in it. "My whole family," says Philip Henry, "is to be at court to-day; the KING of Heaven hath sent positive orders; and HE will not excuse either son or daughter, either man-servant or maid-servant."

The sacredness of the LORD's day should not be broken in upon because visitors happen to be staying with us. Among the Jews, the stranger, although of a different faith, was not only to be encouraged to hallow the Sabbath, but he was strictly forbidden to violate its sacred rest. This was the law of the land, as well as of religion.

If visitors do not choose to accompany us to church, they should be left to their own reflections at home. *Our* duty is to obey GOD's laws, and our example may thus often preach a better sermon than many which are delivered from the pulpit.

The Duke of Wellington was a pattern in this respect. Come what might, he was always in his place in the LORD's house, and at the LORD's table. He was also very particular in requiring that his guests should

attend Divine Service. It happened, on one occasion, that Count Nugent, an Irish gentleman, who held a high commission in the Austrian army, was visiting him at Walmer Castle. Sunday morning came, and his excellency said, "Duke, do you go to church?"

"Always; don't you?"

"I can't go to church with you, for you know I am a catholic!"

"O, very well," answered the Duke, ringing the bell. When the servant entered, he quietly said, "His excellency, Count Nugent, wants to go to the Romish chapel; you can show him where it is!" And, sure enough, to the Romish chapel he was marched.

The Duke observed, as he walked to church, "I knew he did not want me to go to church, nor to go himself either; but I thought it best that we should both go."

We are thankful to remember that our own great military chieftains have not always been unmindful of their obligations to the LORD of Hosts.

In 1859, when General Winfield Scott was sent out by our government to arrange some difficulties at Puget's Sound, he reached San Francisco on the morning of the LORD's Day. A great crowd at once assembled at the wharf to welcome him, attended by a band of music, and an orator was ready with his well-rounded periods, to offer incense to the hero of so many battles.

General Scott soon appeared on deck, with his large Prayer-Book under his arm, and bowing to the en-

thusiastic people, he said, "You must pardon me, fellow-citizens, for not accepting your kind offer of hospitalities, to-day. For forty years, I have been a church-going man, and have tried to honor the Sabbath."

Chief Justice Hales has left on record this important testimony, which should be well pondered by Sabbath-breakers.

"I have found by strict and diligent observation, that a due observing of the duty of the LORD's day has ever had joined to it a blessing on the rest of my time; and the week that has been so begun, has been blessed and prosperous to me. And, on the other side, when I have been negligent of the duties of this day, the rest of the week has been unsuccessful and unhappy in my secular employment; so that I could easily make an estimate of my success in my own secular employment the week following, by the manner of my passing this day. And this," he adds, "I write not lightly, or inconsiderately; but upon a long and sound observation and experience."

While the good LORD blesses those who honor HIS sacred day, HE will certainly punish the profaners of it.

May we all learn the wisdom and the happiness of regarding this holy time as that in which we are not to follow our own way, nor find our own pleasure, nor speak our own words!

Even in this life, we shall reap the good of it, in more vigorous health of body and mind; more thrift in business; more domestic happiness; and, what is

better than all, the approval of an enlightened conscience.

To "ride upon the high places of the earth," will not be our only recompense. Well-spent Sabbaths *here*, will secure for us the blessedness of the eternal Sabbath, *hereafter*.

"If this be not heaven," said one who carried out the spirit of our text, through long and happy years, "it must be *the way to it!*"

"This day may our devotion rise,  
As greatful incense to the skies;  
And heaven that sweet repose bestow,  
Which none but they who feel it know.

This peaceful calm within the breast,  
Is the sure pledge of heavenly rest,  
Which for the Church of God remains,  
The end of cares, the end of pains."

## SERMON XVII.\*

### THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION A RELIGION OF SELF-DENIAL.

[SEXAGESIMA.]

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HE said unto them all, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.—ST. LUKE ix. 23.

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CAN these be the words of the meek and gentle, the tender and compassionate JESUS, who came into the world for the express purpose of relieving the burdens of humanity, and making men good and happy? It is elsewhere said that HE is like HIS FATHER; indeed "the express image of HIS person;" and we know that "GOD is Love." All the works of GOD loudly proclaim HIS benevolence, and it is lavished most of all upon HIS noblest creature, Man. This beautiful world has been fitted up expressly for his accommodation, and his whole being, adjusted to its possession and enjoyment. The atmosphere might have been such, that every respiration would have been an

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\* This sermon has been kindly furnished for the volume, by the Rt. Rev. B. B. Smith, D. D., Presiding Bishop of the Church, in the United States.



agony; and the eye so constructed that every ray of light would have inflicted torture. Instead of which, nature is so adjusted to our constitution, and our senses to the planet we inhabit, as best to minister to our enjoyment.

And yet, the Christian Religion, the last, best gift of GOD to man, is a religion of self-denial! And our text, the tender and loving utterance of the greatest benefactor of our race! How can this be accounted for?

1. Only by the fact that this is a world in ruins; and that GOD is dealing with a race that needs to be redeemed, renewed, and sanctified before it can be blessed. By the fall our whole moral nature has become deranged and disordered. GOD, the great and good Physician, and HE alone, can estimate the virulence of the disease, and what sharp remedies it may require.

With the exception of your near relatives, and your beloved pastor, no visitor at your house is more welcome than your own chosen and trusted physician, who, through many scenes of sickness and sorrow, has endeared himself to you, as a special friend. He is called to consider the case of a beloved child very near to death, from the effects of some painful disorder; or some terrible accident. After carefully examining the case, he exclaims, this is dreadful! No palliatives will reach this case; no emollients can heal this wound! The most violent and painful remedies must be applied; perhaps an agonizing operation performed! Do you, for one moment, call his benevo-

lence in question? on the contrary, would you not accuse him of the basest perfidy; and the greatest cruelty; if, out of a weak pity for the child, or a mistaken regard to your wishes, he should make a false report of the case, prescribe quiet, and an agreeable anodyne, and so let his life ebb silently away?

Such is the mercy of well-meant and well-timed severity.

A terrible lesson has lately been read to the whole civilized world, of the cruelty of unbounded self-indulgence, with unlimited means for its gratification.

Upon becoming of age, the late Marquis of Hastings found himself in possession of one of the most princely incomes of any subject in Europe, said to amount to not less than a million and a half of dollars a year. He at once set every appliance at work, which such boundless wealth, in a luxurious age can command, to gratify every taste, to pamper every appetite, and to indulge every conceivable wish, which he fancied would add to his gratification or promote his pleasure. At the age of thirty he sunk under the insupportable load of inward dissatisfaction, ruined health, wasted fortune, impaired credit, and the execrations of a community too full of horror at his faults, dread of his example, and contempt for his voluntary self-degradation, to feel much pity for his fate. Restraint, correction, self-denial, discipline are the only remedies for such excesses.

2. These thoughts are forced upon us, by the fact that we are fallen and depraved creatures; and that under the unalterable laws of the divine government,

suffering follows close upon the heels of sinning. It would be unsafe to repeal this law, and to reverse it would be to dethrone the ALL-WISE. The ALL-MERCIFUL has, therefore, devised the scheme, by which suffering and sorrow are made salutary and remedial. "Made perfect, through suffering!" We can understand it when applied to an imperfect creature, but so fundamental a law of the plan of salvation is it, that it is said of the DIVINE MEDIATOR HIMSELF "that even HE was made perfect through suffering!"

Discipline and self-denial, in order to the formation of character is the law of our present state of probation.

Select a person of the most amiable and lovely disposition of all your acquaintance, and grant him long years of perfect health, and uninterrupted and boundless prosperity, no one to advise, restrain, or contradict him, every want supplied and every wish gratified, without the restraining grace of GOD, must not pride be pampered, selfishness grow to inordinate dimensions, and dissatisfaction, complaining and peevishness, begin to assert their hateful dominion? Unsanctified prosperity! it is hard to say whether those who have long experienced it, inflict most misery upon themselves or upon all those around them.

Whereas, the chastenings of our Heavenly FATHER, on every generous and noble nature, and much more on every renewed and sanctified heart, exert a refining and tender influence, and are the best, and as far as we can judge, the only correctives of our worldly, proud and selfish dispositions. Therefore it is written, "whom the LORD loveth HE chasteneth, and scourgeth

every son whom HE receiveth;" and again, "think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened unto you, but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of CHRIST'S sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." Though this is doubtless spoken of the cruel suffering of persecution even unto death; yet is it true, in its measure, of all our daily trials and vexations.

Who but those who at some time have been pinched by poverty, can enter fully into the distresses of the destitute? Who that has not lost a child can sit by the side of one who weeps for his first born, and shed the gushing tears of sympathy; so much more soothing than common words of comfort? In the hovels of the poor, and by the pillow of the sick and the dying, I have often met the sons and daughters of affluence, but never one whose sun of prosperity had never been clouded; only those who had often held fellowship with grief; and what a precious balm true sympathy is! Were there no wounded hearts in the community, where were the watchers?

And how are characters formed of the heroic type? Never in the lap of luxury and ease; but always in the ranks of those who, through fatigue, and watchings, and fastings, and bloody conflicts, battle for the right.

Heroic nations are those who have contended for their liberties and their religion against odds, and amid great sacrifices long endured: and the heroic ages are not those of gold and silver, but of iron. Through all time, on the pages of history, there stand

out, now and then, such heroic characters; but none which shine with so divine a halo around their heads, as the blessed company of the prophets and apostles, and the noble army of martyrs: "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens." They that contend in the race, "run all, but one obtaineth the prize." There is, therefore, an absolute necessity "that we should endure hardness if we would be good soldiers of JESUS CHRIST." The reason then is evident enough why the blessed religion of our merciful REDEEMER should be a self-denying religion.

a. How strangely mistaken are those who suppose that the rich and prosperous are the peculiar favorites of Heaven. Very true, much of success in life, is the reward of worthy effort wisely directed; but wealth likely to endure, and honorable success are almost invariably the reward of long years of strenuous, self-denying, and honest exertion. Where gains are dishonest, or the fruit of sudden and fortuitous success, who does not know to what a rank growth of the most odious and detestable vices, it commonly leads? The exceptions are, where early habits of control, and good principles prevent, or the grace of God mercifully interposes.

b. Thank GOD, then, may dear Christian friends, who has subjected you for so many years, to that discipline which has been the greatest trial of your faith

and patience; who has given you this precious evidence that you belong to the number of his chosen ones, that he has not left you unchastised. How can you write bitter things against yourselves as if your God had forsaken you and was afflicting you with all the storms of his displeasure, when you know that he has dealt thus with all his saints which have been since the world began. Learn to welcome the cross as the appropriate badge of your holy profession. Avail yourselves of all the religious privileges of this holy season, when we are so forcibly reminded of the voluntary suffering of our blessed LORD, and are called, in our measure, to imitate HIS example.

But above all, bow with all humility, under the load of the special involuntary cross, so repugnant to your peculiar taste and temperament which God, in HIS great love wherewith HE has loved you, has laid upon you for your soul's good. Is it poverty? look up to HIM, "who, though HE was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we, through HIS poverty might be made rich." Is it blighted prospects and disappointed hopes? remember "this is not your home, that here we have no continuing city or abiding place." Is it suspicion and reproach, unsuccessful labor, or unrequited self-sacrifice? we look for no temporal reward, but for the approval of a good conscience and the approbation of our God. Do we mourn the loss of dear departed friends? Remember, "we sorrow not like those who are without hope; but we know that those who sleep in JESUS will God bring with HIM: wherefore comfort one another with these

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words. "The time is short. We are waiting for, and hastening unto the coming of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST with all His saints and all His Holy Angels with HIM, when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth!" Amen.

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THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION A SELF-DENIAL.

## SERMON XVIII.

### JESUS OF NAZARETH PASSING BY.

[QUINQUAGESIMA.]

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JESUS of Nazareth passeth by!—ST. LUKE xviii. 37.

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OUR blessed LORD had spent the Sabbath at Jericho, and on the following day, HE was leaving the city, attended by an eager crowd, who had been attracted by the report of HIS wonderful miracles, and by the rumor which then began to spread abroad, that HE was soon to establish a new and glorious Kingdom, upon the ruins of the government which held them in bondage.

Hastening onward, they had reached the suburbs of the town, when a plaintive cry was distinctly heard, above the hum of voices, and the tramp of so many feet, "JESUS, Thou SON of David, have mercy on me!"

For a moment or two, the earnest appeal was hushed; and over in the direction from which the sound had come, were now heard angry voices, trying to stifle the cry of suffering; but soon, the touching prayer was heard, louder than before, "JESUS, Thou SON of David, have mercy on me!"



We can almost see the poor blind man, seated under the shadow of the hedge, by the road-side, waiting for the approach of passers-by, of whom he might ask a small pittance, to supply his pressing wants.

Bartimeus was no doubt well-known to the inhabitants of Jericho, as one afflicted with a double portion of misery, poverty and blindness.

The sound of the approach of an unusual crowd had fallen on his sensitive ear, while he sat there in his darkness; and as the anxious throng increased, talking loudly and earnestly as they passed, he ceased his usual petition for alms, to ask what it meant. The reply was the thrilling announcement of the text "JESUS of Nazareth passeth by!"

He had often heard of the miracles of the SON of GOD, and something had taught him, that this must, indeed, be *the* long-expected PROPHET, who, according to the words of Isaiah, should give sight to the blind. [xlii: 7].

He had often wished that the SAVIOUR, in some of His journeyings through the land, might be present to relieve his sufferings; and now, at this unexpected moment, the glad announcement came, "JESUS of Nazareth passeth by!"

No time was to be lost. Already the great PROPHET was hurrying on HIS way; and as a thrill of joy shot through the blind man, at the tidings which he heard, he raised the piteous cry, "JESUS, Thou SON of David, have mercy on me!"

These were offensive words to many of the crowd; and the proud title of "SON of David," which belonged

to the MESSIAH, could not thus be given, without indignant rebuke, to the despised Teacher of Nazareth. Enraged men pressed about Bartimeus, as he sat, trembling with emotion and anxiety, and harsh and threatening voices commanded him to be silent.

The blind man had before appealed to thousands who could give him *bread*; but, now, for the first time, has he met with one, who can restore his *sight*. In a few moments more, the SAVIOUR will be out of hearing, and perchance, may never visit Jericho again.

Bartimeus risks everything which hatred and malignity can do to him, and cries aloud, in the earnestness of his faith, "Thou SON of David, have mercy on me!"

The plaintive words arrest our LORD in HIS journey; HE cannot go on with that piteous cry sounding in HIS ears. "HE stood."

Observe the mightiness of prayer! "Once the sun of nature stood still at the desire of Joshua, who was eager to complete his victory. And, lo! now 'the SON of righteousness' stands still, with 'healing in HIS wings,' at the desire of Bartimeus, who begs a cure."\*

Soon the angry crowd about the poor blind are pushed aside, and a friendly voice says to him "Be of good comfort; rise; HE calleth for thee!"

Bartimeus cast off the loose garment which hindered his steps, and led by a kindly hand, he hurried to the SAVIOUR.

A colloquy so earnest could not be otherwise than brief.

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\* William Jay, of Bath.

"What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?"

"LORD, that I might receive my sight!"

"Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

Forthwith light poured into those sightless balls, and Bartimeus beheld the gentle and benignant face of the SON of GOD; while a loud cry of gratitude and praise burst forth from the astonished crowd.

In the case of the blind man we see the working of that living faith which leads the sinner to apply to CHRIST successfully. Its *nature*, its *manifestation*, and the *encouragements to its exercise*, are distinctly brought to view.

1. And, first, the condition of poor Bartimeus bears a striking resemblance to our natural state, unrenewed by Divine grace.

The Bible tells us that we are all "poor, and miserable, and blind and naked." [Rev. iii: 17]. We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves. The scales of ignorance and unbelief cloud our moral vision, and we grope along through the world, falling into the snares and pits, which Satan contrives for our destruction. In our unregenerated state, or with the gift of our new birth unvalued and unimproved, we are unable even to think a good thought, much less do a good act. If we set out in the pursuit of happiness, how often do we fail in obtaining the object of our desire! The attractive fields of pleasure and ambition, to which temptation leads, secure to us no lasting enjoyment. The bitter dregs of sorrow are found in every cup of earthly enjoyment; the ties of kindred and friendship are broken almost as soon as we have learned to es-

time their real value; riches escape from our grasp; and, faint and disheartened, in this blind pursuit of happiness, the reluctant confession is forced from us, "Vanity of vanities, all is vainty!"

And, what prospect have we of improving our condition? Shall we press on, hoping that time will provide a remedy for our misfortunes? Far better, like blind Bartimeus, to sit patiently by the way-side, begging for the temporary relief which chance may throw in our way, than to travel on to certain and irretrievable ruin.

2. Again, the source from which the blind man sought for help, is open also to ourselves.

He had tried, no doubt, a thousand remedies, of others suggesting, and his own contriving; but, now, distrustful and despairing of human aid, he had abandoned all reliance upon himself, and every arm of flesh; and, in the most hopeful of all attitudes, waited for help, from its true and only source.

The same great PHYSICIAN who opened his blind eyes, offers to "heal *our* infirmities." HE "giveth sight to the blind." HE helpeth them that are fallen. HE provideth for the wants of the needy.

3. Again, Bartimeus could not *see* the SAVIOUR; he only *heard* that HE was passing by.

Our condition is the same. We, too, have heard of the fame of JESUS; of HIS sojourn upon earth; of HIS acts of mercy; of HIS compassion, and HIS willingness to save. Although now seated at the right hand of the FATHER, "HE is not far from every one of us."

4. Another point suggested by this history, is the importance of improving present opportunities of receiving, or doing good. This was probably our SAVIOUR's first visit to Jericho, and HE never returned there again.

It was the first time that the blind man was able to supplicate HIS mercy; and if this occasion should be thrown away, his case would be hopeless.

To-day, GOD causes all HIS goodness to pass before us. To-morrow, the season of probation may have closed.

5. Again, when some of the multitude rebuked Bartimeus for calling upon JESUS for help, he did not hold his peace, but cried out still more importunately, "Thou SON of David, have mercy on me!"

The votaries of the world are always ready to throw obstacles in the way of those who manifest an anxiety to return to the service of GOD.

The awakened penitent must shut his ears against their deceitful words. He must say to such as would persuade him to remain in his wretched and hopeless state, "Hinder me not. I *will* keep the commandments of my GOD!"

6. The case of the blind man teaches, also, the efficacy of earnest prayer.

At first, it seemed doubtful whether his request would be granted. The SAVIOUR was hastening on HIS way; the multitude were deaf to the cry of distress; and his only opportunity of relief was likely to be lost.

Hope and fear struggled in his breast, and he cried aloud once more, "O, SON of David, have mercy on me!" The prayer was heard, and the SAVIOUR stopped and listened to the story of his misfortune. We all have the same encouragement to cry mightily unto HIM for help.

7. It is also worthy of notice that when Bartimeus received the cheering message, "Rise, HE calleth for thee!" he gladly obeyed the summons, and even cast away his outer garment, that there might be no delay in throwing himself at the feet of JESUS.

The same message is now sent to you: "Rise, HE calleth for thee!" Let HIM not call in vain.

8. This history also teaches us the value of faith. "Thy faith hath saved thee!" "Thy faith hath made thee whole!"

There was no virtue in the faith itself; but it brought the blind man to JESUS. It was the germ within him of those dispositions which made him a proper object of GOD'S mercy. It opened his mouth in prayer; and it closed his ears to all the dissuasives which the world, or Satan, or his own evil heart would interpose between him and the SAVIOUR.

Our only hope is in cultivating and cherishing this lively faith.

9. The story of blind Bartimeus suggests one other lesson.

As soon as he had received his sight, he followed JESUS, "glorifying GOD." [St. LUKE xviii: 43].

This was the only return he could make, and it was one which no thankful heart could refuse to offer.

GOD's claim upon *our* gratitude and love is far greater. Bartimeus had, indeed, been restored to sight, and been allowed to look out upon the beauties of creation, and to behold the light of the sun; but we are "called out of darkness," into a more "marvellous light," which shines upon us in the face of our adorable SAVIOUR.

HE takes us by the hand, and leads us forth safely, "in the paths of righteousness." HE promises to "guide us with HIS counsel," here, and "afterwards, receive us to glory." We are bound, therefore, by every consideration of duty and of interest, to "glorify GOD," by "following JESUS in the way." We are bound to follow HIM, to the exclusion of all other masters; and to follow HIM *always*.

Mrs. Sigourney has written many beautiful lines, but none more touching than these:—

“WATCHER! who wakest by the bed of pain,  
While the stars sweep on in their midnight train,  
Stifling the tear for thy loved one's sake,  
Holding thy breath lest his sleep should break!  
In the loneliest hour there's a Helper nigh.  
'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!'”

STRANGER! afar from thy native land,  
Whom no one takes with a brother's hand,  
Table and hearth-stones are glowing free,  
Casements are sparkling, but not for thee;  
There is ONE who can tell of a home on high.  
'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!'”

MOURNER! who sittest in the church yard lone,  
Scanning the lines on that marble stone,

Plucking the weed from thy children's bed,  
Planting the myrtle and rose instead;  
Look up from the tomb with thy tearful eye.  
'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!'

FADING ONE! with the hectic streak  
In thy vein of fire and thy wasted cheek,  
Fearest thou the shade of the darkest vale?  
Seek to the GUIDE who can never fail;  
He hath trod it HIMSELF; He will hear thy sigh.  
'Jesus of Nazareth passeth by!'"



## SERMON XIX.

### FASTING.

[ASH WEDNESDAY.]

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Then shall they fast in those days.—ST. MARK ii. *part of 20th verse*

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IF it were not wrong to be amused at evil, in any shape, it would provoke a smile to hear the flimsy and foolish excuses which self-indulgent people make for neglecting the Christian duty of *Fasting*.

“I never *could* fast,” says one; as if the whole question was thus satisfactorily settled.

“It makes me feel cross,” or “it gives me the headache,” chimes in another.

“It unfits me for everything else,” argues a third.

Would not the same course of reasoning render it inexpedient and improper for these persons to partake of a sumptuous dinner? Does not a rich feast often bring on headaches, and lethargy, and other unpleasant effects? And yet, how many of these persons ever abstained from sharing in a Christmas dinner for such reasons as these? If they are good and sufficient ones for neglecting the requisite abstinence expected

of us during Lent, why do they cease to be valid in the other case? Fasting is recommended to the Christian in every way in which a duty could be presented to him.

Does he ask, where is Fasting *commanded*? I need only point to the passage in the prophecy of Joel: "Turn ye even to ME, saith the LORD, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning." [ii: 12].

Is *example* insisted on? Moses in the mount, fasting forty days and forty nights, [Ex. xxxiv: 28]; Elijah spending the same portion of time in this way, [1st Kings xix: 8]; David "humbling his soul with fasting," [Ps. xxxv: 13]; Daniel, during the dismal days of the captivity, [ix: 3]; our Blessed LORD HIMSELF, [St. Matt. iv: 2]; St. Paul, "in fastings often," [2d Cor. vi: 5]; these and other cases will at once be remembered by every reader of the Bible.

Would any one seek to escape from an unpleasant duty, by inquiring what *encouragement* we have to engage in it?

I need not go beyond the promise made by our SAVIOUR, in the Gospel for the day, to those who practise fasting unostentatiously, and with no expectation of worldly applause. [St. Matt. vi: 17-18].

And, then, if it be demanded to *show any good which has been accomplished by fasting*; let the history of the Ninevites, who turned aside the threatened judgments of GOD, by humbling their souls with fasting, be read, and meditated upon. [Jonah iii: 10]. All this being so, it is, nevertheless not to be denied that there is no

duty so unpopular in the world, and so grievous to the flesh, as the duty of fasting. This must of necessity be the case, since it is aimed directly at the pleasures of the world, and contradicts and resists the cravings of the appetite.

The Scriptural evidence being so plain on the subject, no one who wishes to lead a religious life, could venture to question that he was expected to fast at *some* time, and the only point to be settled would be *when* this duty should be observed.

If left to ourselves, we should be disposed to put it off, under various pleas, and a "convenient season" for it would seldom come. The Church, accordingly, appoints a time, and not to obey her voice in a matter so Scriptural, and so perfectly in harmony with the precepts and the example of our Blessed LORD, is to run the risk of being regarded "as a heathen man, and a publican."

"Welcome, dear *feast* of Lent! Who loves not thee,  
He loves not temperance, or authority,  
But is composed of passion.  
The Scriptures bid us *fast*; the Church says *now*,  
Give to thy mother, what thou wouldst allow  
To every corporation."

Thus sweetly sings quaint old George Herbert, intimating that to *fast* in the flesh, is, in fact, to *feast* in the Spirit. Observe how gradually the Church services have been preparing our minds for the solemnities of Lent. There has been no sudden and abrupt transition from festival to fast; no putting on of sackcloth

and ashes, before the smile of holy joy has faded from our lips.

Having rejoiced with angels at the SAVIOUR'S birth, on Christmas, and adored HIM with the Wise Men, on the Epiphany, we have devoted the three Sundays before Lent, to the contemplation of the scenes of humiliation and suffering, which are to follow.

To-day, the Church "sanctifies a fast," and "calls a solemn assembly." She bids her members, old and young, come up to the courts of the LORD, and lift up their voices with those of GOD'S ministers, in earnest supplication for pardon.

As our Divine MASTER retired from the world, into the wilderness, for the space of forty days, and humbled HIMSELF with fasting and prayer, so do we begin, this day, to enter upon the observance of the same sacred duties. HE was pure and holy, and needed no such exercises and observances for HIS own sake; but HE fasted and prayed for our sakes, and that HE might be an example to us.

It will serve as a test of our sincerity, to notice how closely and carefully we can bring ourselves to follow in HIS footsteps.

What folly for those to claim to be taking up the cross, and living as children of GOD, who will not keep themselves within the limits of moderation and wholesome abstinence, even during the brief period of Lent!

Throughout this holy season, we beseech GOD to "give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the spirit, we may ever obey the

godly motives" of our Blessed MASTER, "in righteousness and true holiness," and to HIS "honor and glory." The Heavenly BRIDEGROOM having been taken away, HIS absence reminds us of our sins which caused HIS death, and of our privileges which have grown out of it, and therefore the days have come, according to HIS own prediction in the text, when HIS disciples are required to fast.

While insisting thus strongly upon the performance of this duty, it is but proper to add that no degree of "bodily exercise" is expected of any one, which is really injurious to health, or which would unfit him to attend to his ordinary duties.

On Ash Wednesday and Good Friday, our fast may well be more strict than on the other days of Lent. The Church makes a very proper distinction between *fasting* and *abstinence*, and it is *abstinence* from the grosser sorts of food, from delicacies, and from other things which can be safely dispensed with, which is to constitute our self-denial, during most of the forty days.

Like every other part of Christian discipline, the practice of fasting must be learned, gradually and progressively; and it is a great mistake to attempt to rise to the highest degree of it at first. One well-spent Lent, prepares us to do better upon the beginning of the next.

Above all, do nothing to be seen of men, and avoid watching the practice of others in this matter of abstinence. We are not to pride ourselves upon our conscientious attention to the duty, any more than we

would on taking bitter medicines which our impaired health demands.

“It’s true, we cannot reach CHRIST’S fortieth day ;  
 Yet, to go part of that religious way,  
 Is better than to rest.  
 We cannot reach our SAVIOUR’S purity ;  
 Yet are we bid, *be holy even as He*,  
 In both let’s do our best.”—GEORGE HERBERT.

There are, however, other duties of Lent besides the humbling of our souls by fasting.

We should be often engaged in prayer and meditation, and even our reading should be of a more serious character than common. While it would be unreasonable to expect every individual member of a congregation to be present at every public service, it is not too much to look for some representative from each household, and that, too, without any regard to weather.

Amusements, however innocent at other times, should be entirely given up during Lent, and the influence of Christians should be felt in the midst of every community where they dwell, silently and gradually leading others to fall into the observance of our holy seasons, and thus preparing the way for that union among all GOD’S children, which every devout heart must long for. Time usually devoted to recreation may, very properly, be given now to offices of kindness and charity, and these will be more acceptable to GOD than any mere arbitrary mortifications.

Fasting and alms-giving are called, by Archbishop Leighton, “the wings of prayer,” and so, indeed, they

are. The stricter our self-denials, whether in food, clothing, or in anything else, the larger may be our benefactions. With full stomachs and well replenished pockets, we can hardly have the assurance to enter into the privacy of our closets, to pray to our FATHER, and shut the door of our hearts against the children of that FATHER, whom, although HE tenderly loves, HE has not so liberally blessed with earthly good.

The particulars just mentioned are, after all, only the outer *shell*; while the *heart* of it is a serious and sincere turning unto GOD, with a resolute purpose to amend our ways and our doings; and, hereafter, to walk before HIM in pureness of living and truth. None of us are so perfect that we can afford to neglect this opportunity for receiving good. Who is there among us that has not grievous sins to confess, evil habits to be subdued, and lusts of the flesh to mortify?

We humble our souls with fastings, now, that by denying and curbing sinful appetites, we may be raised to purer tastes and heavenly longings.

We prostrate ourselves in dust and ashes, that thus sorrowing after a godly sort, we may find pardon and peace, through CHRIST JESUS.

Easter, with its gladness, and its spiritual rejoicings, only follows a well-spent Lent.

May GOD give us grace to improve this one as we ought!

## SERMON XX.

### THE POOR IN SPIRIT.

[FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.]

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Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven.—ST. MATTHEW v. 3.

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IN the summer of 1187, the celebrated battle of Hattin was fought, in which the last remnant of the Crusaders was destroyed on the height of Tell Hattin, after the army had been routed in the valley below, by Saladin, the brave.

Six hundred years later, on the plain of Jezreel, Napoleon, with his invincible legions, put to inglorious flight, the vast hordes of Turks, which had marched against him, confident of victory.

How strange the fact, that on this same spot, known as the Horns of Hattin, or the Mount of the Beatitudes,\* the DIVINE REDEEMER should have pronounced His blessing upon the meek and the peace-maker.

The Sermon on the Mount was delivered about

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\* Robinson's Palestine, vol. ii., p. 370.



midsummer, during the first year of our SAVIOUR'S public ministry.

There seems to be something more than a pleasant fancy in the idea that as the LAW was given from a *mountain*, with threatenings and thunder, so a *mountain* was chosen by the DIVINE PROPHET and TEACHER, as a fitting place to explain this Law, by the clearer and milder light of the Gospel.

What a glorious accomplishment of the prediction of Moses, "A Prophet like unto me shall the LORD thy GOD raise up unto thee," [Deut. xviii: 15]; when our Blessed LORD opened HIS mouth, to instruct the world in righteousness! "HE who before had opened the mouth of Moses and all the Prophets, now opens HIS own mouth; HE who had taught the world by them concerning HIMSELF, now teaches in HIS own Person, GOD with us; and HE delivers in the Sermon on the Mount, a perfect code of Christian Duty." [Dr. Wordsworth].

Well may we listen, in breathless silence, for the first words which fall from HIS gracious lips! The *law* was given by Moses, but *grace* and *truth* came by JESUS CHRIST. When the DIVINE TEACHER opens HIS mouth, let us all open our hearts.

The crowning glory of the Law is poverty of spirit; and while it accomplishes its triumph by making us *poor*, it is the purpose of the Gospel to make us *rich*. Hence, the paradox with which the beatitudes begin: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit; for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven.*"

Observe these pregnant words! It is not poverty

of purse and possession, but poverty of spirit, which entitles us to the blessing. Indeed, the richest in worldly wealth, *may* have the largest share of this commended poorness. "O, sweet, lovely graces, *poverty of spirit and meekness*," says Archbishop Leighton, "that grow low, and are of dark hue, as the violets; but of a fragrant smell."

To be "poor in spirit" does not suppose a cowardly, cringing disposition. It is not accompanied with the sneaking look, and whining tones of such as would seek to buy the good opinion of others, by their own self-abasement.

The "poor in spirit" has that within him which will make him a hero on the battle-field, or a martyr at the stake, if duty should call him to the trial. Money cannot purchase it, neither will the lack of fortune secure it to us. Prince and beggar may share alike in the possession of it.

The poverty of spirit which our SAVIOUR declares to be so supremely blessed, implies—

1. First of all, *a deep and heart-felt sense of our spiritual want and wretchedness.*

"Self-opinion and self-love," says old Dr. South, "are the great strong-holds which the Gospel sets itself to beat down; for, by nature, we are as prone to overvalue as to overlove ourselves; but in both of them there is a kind of spiritual fulness and repletion, which must be removed, before the Gospel can have its effect upon us. CHRIST comes to infuse HIS gifts and graces into the soul; but there is no pouring any thing into a vessel which is already full. And, there-

fore, a man must be emptied of all his fond conceptions and principles, before he can be prepared for the influences of the Spirit."

It is only when we have been brought to acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins, and that it is by grace that we must be saved; that we are in a condition of mind and heart favorable for the cultivation of poverty of spirit.

2. Again, the poverty of spirit spoken of in the text, supposes that we freely and frankly acknowledge *that without the gracious interference and ready help of GOD, we can never be relieved of our misery.*

The humiliating fact must be received as one of the first principles of our faith, that by nature we are "sold under sin," [Romans vii: 14]; and that the SON of GOD must pay our ransom, before we can be free. Self-reliance must be laid aside, since CHRIST will not be the SAVIOUR of those who think that they can do anything to save themselves. "*Of HIM, and through HIM, and to HIM, are all things.*" [Romans xi: 36].

It is mortifying to human pride to be obliged to say, "*There is no health in us;*" thus confessing our depravity of heart. We are all sinners because of in-born corruption, and it is folly to suppose that we are only so by the actual commission of evil.

"I am more afraid of my own heart," says Luther, "than of the Pope and all his cardinals. I have within me the great pope, *self!*"

Sin is born in us, as surely as fire is enclosed in the flint. It only waits for the proper occasion to manifest itself.

"Pray, Mr. Newton," once asked a pert young man, of that devout clergyman, "what do you think of the entrance of sin into the world?"

"Sir," was the prompt response, "I never *think* of it. I *know* there is such a thing in the world, and I know there is a remedy, and there my knowledge begins, and there it ends."

Such is the temper of those who are "poor in spirit."

3. Poverty of spirit implies, also, *that we are willing to serve GOD to the best of our ability, in whatever station it should please HIM to appoint our lot.*

Years ago, a missionary in China, sent out by the London Society, earnestly requested that a colleague might be found to assist him in his labors. The attention of the home committee was directed to a rustic and unprepossessing looking young man, concerning whose qualifications a very good report had been given. One of the examiners was so unfavorably impressed by his uncouth manners, that he frankly said that while he could not consent to recommend him for the office of a missionary, he would be willing to vote for him as a servant, provided he was ready to go forth in that humble capacity. Calling the young man aside, the gentleman stated his objections, and asked whether he would consent to the other proposal. Without a moment's hesitation, and with the most significant and animated expression, the young man answered: "Yes, sir, most certainly; I am willing to be anything, so that I am in the work. To be 'a hewer of wood, and a drawer of water' is too great an honor for me, when the LORD's house is building!"

I need hardly add that the young man\* rose to distinction, as one who did good service for his MASTER.

When we can enter heart and soul, into the Christian nobleness which inspired him thus to act, then we may be sure that we belong to the favored number who are "poor in spirit," whom the SAVIOUR so tenderly loves. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit,*" is HIS own gracious assurance, "*for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven.*"

What privilege could be greater than this? The "poor in spirit" are members, honored and beloved, of GOD's family, and they find in the adorable SAVIOUR, who has established HIS Kingdom in the world, and admitted them to its precious privileges, all that they can possibly wish for.

Accepting HIS offers of mercy on HIS own terms, HE is made unto them "wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." [1st Cor. i: 30]. Their poverty of spirit is the best possible evidence that the REDEEMER has set up HIS throne in their hearts, and while thankfully sharing in the privileges of the Kingdom of grace, upon earth, they are thus being prepared to inherit the Kingdom of glory. Although by no means exempt from the troubles and trials of this mortal state, they have strength afforded more patiently to endure them. In the midst of the worst and sorest of them, they have this abiding comfort; that they, after all, are the only truly rich; the heirs to a Kingdom.

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\* Dr. Milne.

Some of you may be saying to yourselves, "This poverty of spirit is certainly very lovely in those who are so fortunate as to be born with it, or who are naturally mild and amiable; but that for stern and rugged tempers, it is a thing not to be thought of!"

Ah! how little can you know of the power of Divine grace!

Hundreds and thousands, once as fierce and blood-thirsty as the lion, have, through the influences of God's SPIRIT, become like the gentle lamb; and the cruel and unrelenting vulture, has been transformed into the harmless dove.

Poverty of spirit must be prayed for, and struggled after, by one and all of us, and until we have succeeded, in some degree, in its attainment, we have little cause for self-gratulation or confidence. It is simply absurd to be pluming ourselves with the fond conceit that we shall rise to the higher estate of angels, when we are not striving to make ourselves even tolerably good men.

If, then, so very much depends upon our being "poor in spirit," we may well ask whether we have *that deep and heart-felt sense of our spiritual want and wretchedness; the full conviction that without the gracious interference and ready help of GOD, we can never be relieved of our misery; that willingness to serve HIM to the best of our ability, in whatever station it shall please HIM to appoint our lot; all of which is implied by our SAVIOUR, in the text.*

The worldly-minded may regard these as hard and unreasonable terms; but the heirs to a KINGDOM will

not reason in this way. If the cross be heavy, we have not far to carry it. We must learn to bow our heads, and bend our knees, and subdue our evil tempers *now*, or the Heavenly inheritance will be lost to us. The gates of the New Jerusalem are not so highly arched as those of the palaces of earthly monarchs; and they who expect to enter them at all, must do it upon their knees.

## SERMON XXI.

### THE COMFORTS OF THE MOURNER.

[SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.]

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Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.—St. MATTHEW, v: 4.

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“CHRISTIANS might avoid much trouble and inconvenience,” says the devout Payson, “if they would only believe what they profess—that GOD is able to make them happy without anything else. They imagine, if such a dear friend were to die, or such and such blessings to be removed, they should be miserable; whereas, GOD can make them a thousand times happier without them. To mention my own case, GOD has been depriving me of one blessing after another; but as every one was removed, he has come in and filled up its place; and now, when I am a cripple, and not able to move, I am happier than I ever was in my life before, or ever expect to be; and if I had believed this twenty years ago, I might have been spared much anxiety.”

The religion of our LORD and SAVIOUR is the religion of sorrow, and HE who was emphatically “a

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man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," [Is. liii: 3] imparts to us the secret of finding true comfort for our souls.

"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted." The text can bear two meanings. Those persons who endure afflictions with resignation, and they who sincerely mourn for their sins, may both be accounted blessed.

It cannot be questioned that the sorrow occasioned by the loss of friends, or possessions, often prepare the heart to welcome and embrace the promises of God, which, otherwise, it might have been tempted to reject.

Sir Walter Scott, whose observations on religious subjects are often much to the purpose, has beautifully remarked, "There are those to whom a sense of religion has come in storm and tempest; there are those whom it has surrounded amid scenes of revelry and idle vanity; there are those, too, who have heard its still small voice amid rural leisure and placid contentment. But, perhaps, the knowledge which causeth not to err, is most frequently impressed upon the mind during seasons of affliction; and tears are the softened showers which cause the seeds of heaven to spring and take root in the human heart."

Multitudes could testify, that the removal of some dear friend to a better world, first inspired within themselves a desire to go there, and, as a natural consequence, led them to put forth efforts by which they might fairly hope to attain this end. A part of their *treasure* having been taken from them, the *heart* and *affections* were sure to follow, and thus, in a measure, they were lifted above the world.

In taking this view of the text, one of two conditions must be understood. The friends thus snatched away by death, must have been prepared for the change, and thus permitted us to rejoice that they are placed beyond the reach of suffering, and allowed to share in the bliss of Paradise; or else the shock occasioned by the departure of one who had been cut off in his sins, has aroused us to a sense of our own imminent peril, and prompted us to prepare to meet GOD. In both cases, it is "GOD that comforteth those that are cast down." [1st Cor. vii: 6]. It is HE who promises that when HIS afflicting rod has accomplished HIS purpose of good, HE "will wipe away tears from all faces." [Is. xxv: 8].

Is not this blessedness?

"Thou hast *lost* thy friend," writes old Bishop Hall; "say rather, thou has *parted* with him. That is properly lost which is past all recovery, which we cannot hope to see any more. It is not so with this friend for whom thou mournest. He is only gone home a little before thee; thou art following him. You, too, shall meet in your FATHER'S house, and enjoy each other more happily than you could have done here below."

It is time now to present the text in the other light of which it is susceptible. Our SAVIOUR may be understood as saying, "Blessed are they that mourn for their sins, for they shall be comforted;" comforted with the assurance of pardon, and the hope of future happiness.

The great object of our MASTER'S ministry was to

lead men to repentance. HE endeavored to make them see the evil of sin, that they might be brought to mourn over, and to forsake it; since "godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation." [2d Cor. vii: 10]. There can be no question that this second view of the text, was uppermost in the mind of the DIVINE speaker.

In Charles Simeon's journal of a tour through Scotland, he makes this record: "Went to see Lady Ross's grounds, where were blind men weaving. One of them being asked concerning his knowledge of spiritual things, replied, "I never saw till I was blind; nor did I ever know contentment when I had my eyesight, as I do now that I have lost it."

As pieces of copper are laid in aquafortis, before the engraver begins to work upon them, so does the LORD prepare our hearts by the softening discipline of sorrow and affliction, that HE may trace upon them a deep and lasting impression of HIMSELF.

To "mourn" for our sins, supposes that the HOLY SPIRIT has opened our eyes to see the great evil of them.

They are like the leprosy of old; defiling, loathsome, and incurable by any human means.

There is a striking emblem of the influence of sin in the Judas tree, commonly known by its Judian name, the Red Bud.

In the early spring, even before the appearance of leaves upon it, glowing flowers of bright crimson cover it with beauty, and it often forms a pleasing ornament to the lawn and garden. The brilliant colors of the Judas tree allure many unsuspecting insects to

their destruction. They come to suck nectar from its attractive blossoms, and fall dead from the effects of its deceitful poison. Although covered so profusely with the buds of promise, it yields no fruit; and stands as a mournful emblem of the deceitfulness and emptiness of sin.

If we had only been guilty of breaking GOD's righteous law for one *day*, or even for one *hour*, we should feel compunction and shame for it, when we came to our sober senses; but the condition of things is so infinitely worse, that words can hardly be found to describe it. Every separate sin has been a distinct defiance of His authority, and this has been going on all our lives long.

"Dead leaves fall, one by one, light almost as the air through which they fall. What a heavy, putrid mass they become, when they are thickened together, full of all uncleanness! In like way a man commits sin, and thinks so lightly of it, that he will not be able to tell, after a time, how many very deadly sins he has committed. But, when he sees all, festering in their own corruption and foulness, within and around him, a loathsome, sickening sight they, yea, he himself is to himself!"\* And then comes the season of mourning for these sins. The anguish of his soul, if it could be put into words, would be something like this: "O, wretched, undone creature that I am! All these years wasted in sin! a thousand opportunities for good worse

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\* Dr. Pusey's Parochial Sermons, p. 135.

than thrown away ! How much precious time I have devoted to the pampering of my decaying, dying body ! My immortal soul ; how little have I thought of its destiny. What comfort can wealth, or fashion, or praise, or flattery, or pleasure, afford me in a dying hour ? Thou, O long-suffering FATHER art HE whom I have most of all offended ; and yet, from THEE alone must I seek for comfort. If THOU shouldest be extreme to mark my misdeeds, how could I stand before THEE ? ‘Have mercy upon me, O GOD, after THY great goodness ; according to the multitude of THY mercies, do away mine offences.’ [Ps. 51]. Let the atoning sacrifice of THY blessed SON save me from the pains of eternal death.

Help me to do the thing that pleaseth THEE ; and let THY loving SPIRIT lead me forth in the path of righteousness !”

Such, in substance, would be the language of the troubled spirit. No mortal eye witnesses the scene of sorrow ; and no mortal ear catches these words of contrition. No “seats for mourners” are arranged, and no theatrical display is made, of what is too sacred for the cold and unsympathizing eye of the world to behold, and for any ear but that of the all-compassionate ONE to hear.

The penitent, who sincerely mourns for his sins, seeks to be *cured* rather than *eased* ; and he regards mere outward reformation quite as absurd as for one to attempt to heal a dangerous wound in his body, by a plaster spread on the outside of his clothes.

. This mourning for our sins is more than one out-

burst of grief, no matter how passionate and overpowering it may be. "Godly sorrow" is a *continued action*, extending, more or less, through months and years. It is, by no means, a cloudy day, with no sunshine; nor a dismal night, relieved by no brilliant star; but like St. Paul, when describing his own Christian experience, the humble believer can speak of himself, "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." [2d Cor. vi: 10].

While rigid self-examination will show him that he has made *some* advancement in the way he should go, there will be traces enough of his old nature ever remaining behind, to prevent him from being confident and boastful.

The prayers and thanksgivings in which he acknowledges the sustaining grace of God, will be accompanied by renewed confessions of unworthiness, and of vows poorly kept, or sinfully broken.

"E'en the rapture of pardon is mingled with fears,  
And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears."

Morning by morning the Christian will be disposed to say, "I will confess my wickedness, and be sorry for my sin," [Ps. xxxviii: 18]; and evening by evening will he repeat the humbling truth, "My misdeeds prevail against me; O, be THOU merciful unto my sins!" [Ps. lxxv; 3]. How true is the homely proverb, "The horse that draws its halter with it, is only half escaped." So long as any remnant of a sinful habit remains in us, we make but an idle boast of our liberty. We are liable, at any moment, to be caught by that which we drag with us. The sincere mourner

for sin will, therefore, be anxious to be as thorough in this heart-work as he can.

It is related of John Bradford, that when he was confessing sin, he would never give over confessing until he felt some brokenness of heart on account of it; and that, when praying for any spiritual mercy, he would never cease his importunity until he had got some relish for that mercy. Happy would it be if the same account could be given of more of us.

Surely they who "are grieved and wearied with the burden" of their sins need comfort; and where can they find it?

Not from the world, nor from any human comforter. And yet GOD has promised such comfort for them. "Blessed are they that mourn," is the assurance of our adorable SAVIOUR, "for they *shall* be comforted."

It is the especial office of the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, to bestow those heavenly consolations, which we all so greatly need; and hence the endearing name by which our SAVIOUR has taught us to speak of HIM; "the COMFORTER." [St. John xiv: 26].

We cannot always explain the mode in which HIS gracious work is accomplished, but we know that HE breathes upon us the fragrant airs of Paradise, because we are supported with more than our natural strength; we are enabled to do GOD's work, and we are comforted with HIS abiding peace. The need of daily offering up renewed prayers for pardon, and the humbling sense of our imperfections and short-comings may cast sombre shadows along our earthly path, and cause life, regarded as a whole, to be a vale of tears, yet, the

unfailing promise remains to cheer us, "The LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and *the days of thy mourning shall be ended.*" [Is. lx: 20].

Meek, patient, self-accusing, humble follower of the LORD JESUS, take courage from the promise of the text. GOD the FATHER loves you. GOD the SON has died for you. GOD the HOLY SPIRIT is your comforter. The three Persons of the ever-adorable Trinity have you in their holy care and keeping.

It is not a dying, helpless mortal, like yourself, who makes the promise, but GOD.

"HE feels thy griefs, HE sees thy fears,  
And counts, and treasures up thy tears."

"Blessed are they that *mourn*; for they shall be *comforted.*"



## SERMON XXII.

### BLESSEDNESS OF THE MEEK.

[THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.]

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Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.—St. MATTHEW v. 5.

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“It requires the same grace,” says John Newton, “to bear with a right spirit, a cross *word* as a cross *injury*; the breaking of a china plate, as the death of an only son.”

The good pastor Oberlin having been forewarned that some brutal people in his parish had formed a plan for waylaying him, and inflicting upon him a severe punishment, chose for his text, on the very Sunday when the outrage was to be perpetrated, our SAVIOUR's words, “I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” [St. Matt. v: 39].

From this verse, he went on to show the duty of suffering with meekness and patience, the wrongs which the evil-minded do to Christians. instead of paying them back after their own sort.

At the close of the service, those engaged in the contemptible plot, met at the house of one of the party, and made themselves merry in trying to conjecture what the pastor would do, when obliged to put his own principles into practice.

To their utter amazement, the door opened, and Oberlin himself stood before them.

"Here I am," he said with that calm dignity which never fails to inspire even the most hardened with respect; "I am acquainted with your design. You have wished to chastise me, because you consider me blameworthy. If I have, indeed, broken the rules which I have laid down for you, punish me for it. It is better that I should deliver myself into your hands, than that you should be guilty of the meanness of an ambuscade."

These straight-forward, simple words, produced the desired effect. The rude peasants were heartily ashamed of their conduct towards the meek servant of the LORD, and they not only begged his forgiveness, but promised never again to doubt his honesty of purpose, nor the sincerity of his desire to do them good. The division of the subject will be simple enough; *the nature of Meekness, and the reward promised to the possessors of it.*

I. First, then, *as to the nature of Meekness.*

It is, sometimes, most improperly confounded with meanness and cowardice; when, in truth, it has nothing in common with either.

We are told that Moses was the meekest of men, [Numbers xii: 3]; but it was this meek man who

entered boldly into the royal palace, and threatened Pharaoh with the heavy judgments of God. He, too, was the agent to execute them.

Our SAVIOUR says of HIMSELF, "*I am meek,*" [St. Matt. xi: 29]; and yet HE stood up manfully for HIS rights, when examined before the High Priest. "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" [St. John xviii: 23].

St. Paul reminds the Christians at Thessalonica that his conduct towards them was always gentle, "Even as a nurse cherisheth her children." [1st Thess. ii: 7].

Listen to the same Apostle, who thus preached meekness, and mark how he behaved when he was unlawfully imprisoned at Philippi. The magistrates, discovering their mistake, wished to hush up the matter, and to dismiss the injured man, as quietly as they could. Did meekness oblige him to submit? "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans," he indignantly exclaims, "and have cast us into prison; and, now, they do thrust us out privily? Nay, verily; but let them come themselves, and fetch us out!" [Acts xvi: 37].

And here the Apostles staid, meek and humble-minded as they were, until the haughty magistrates came and apologized for their wrong.

Meekness is another name for patience under injuries; and the possession of this heavenly temper is a prominent mark of true greatness.

The meek do not stoop to regard petty affronts, and they are content to cast an eye of pity upon those who are cowardly enough to offer them.

The foundations of meekness are laid in humility. Beautifully was this meekness displayed, when good Bishop Griswold was rudely assailed by an impertinent revivalist, in the midst of a company of strangers, with the abrupt question, "Do you think you have any genuine, experimental religion?" "None to speak of," was the meek response of this saint of God.

Meekness has respect both to our duty towards God, and to our fellow-men. Wherever God's will is concerned, it renders us yielding and submissive; and, in dealing with our neighbors, it consists in the forgiveness of injuries, and a patient endurance of reproaches.

No character can even approximate towards perfection, of which meekness does not form a part. Indeed, it is hard to understand how any who call themselves Christians should undervalue this grace, and make no effort to cultivate it.

There is even worldly wisdom in being meek. Such persons are much more likely to steer clear of difficulties, or to get out of them easily, when so unfortunate as to become thus involved.

We are always accustomed to think of Sir Walter Raleigh as a chivalric, noble-hearted man, and yet this did not prevent him from being meek. On one occasion, he was very injuriously treated by a hot-blooded youth, who challenged him to a mortal combat, and actually spat in his face, in the presence of others, on his bravely declining to accept.

The gallant knight quietly took out his handkerchief, and said, "Young man, if I could as easily wipe

your blood from my conscience as I can this defilement from my face, I would this moment take away your life."

Need I go on to add, that meekness prevailed, and that the offender fell upon his knees, and begged forgiveness?

This brings us to the other point which calls for remark in the text.

2. *The reward of Meekness.* "Blessed are the meek," says our SAVIOUR, who is HIMSELF the Divine pattern of it, "for they shall inherit the earth."

This form of expression is borrowed from the common mode in which the Jews spoke of any great privilege which they hoped to gain. The word here rendered *earth*, is the same which in other places refers to the land, or *country* of Israel. [Joshua ii: 3; St. Luke iv: 25; Acts xi: 28].

The possession of Canaan was long looked forward to, by the patriarchs, with the most earnest hope. Again and again was the promise renewed, "I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it." [Gen. xv: 7].

Again and again was sadness turned to rejoicing, by the timely assurance, "All this land will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it forever." [Exodus xxxii: 13].

Similar language was in common use in the various periods of Jewish history, and in the times of David and Isaiah, it had evidently become a proverbial expression, denoting the highest state of worldly prosperity. "Such as are blessed of God, shall inherit

the earth." [Ps. xxxvii: 22]. "Thy people shall all be righteous; they shall inherit the land forever." [Is. lx: 21]. The Jews regarded Canaan as the type of a better, and a Heavenly country, [Heb. xi: 16]; and hence, in the assurance that they should inherit the earth, their expectations were not confined to *temporal* blessings alone, but the eye of faith stretched onward to those which are *eternal*. It is in this sense that our SAVIOUR uses the words in the text. HE does not mean that the meek shall all be the owners of large estates, and be free from the approach of want.

Our SAVIOUR does not even promise that they shall be strangers to care and loss; but HE *does* give us to understand that peculiar and precious blessings are reserved for them. The meek shall inherit calmness and composure of spirit, and peace and comfort of mind.

They shall be more exempt than others, from the vexations of life, and when difficulties unhappily arise, they will be enabled to disentangle themselves, without getting into distressing quarrels, and ruinous law suits.

When the sun of prosperity dawns upon them, its season of brightness will be long; and, should the night of adversity overtake them, its gloominess will be speedily past. Whether their portion in this world be much or little, GOD's blessing will rest on what they have, as the dew of heaven comes down on the flowers, and brings forth their sweetness. It is in the lowly valleys that the warmth of the sun is most

uniformly enjoyed, and so with the happiness of the meek.

Is it our desire to know the way of the LORD, and to be enabled to walk in it? "Them that are meek shall HE guide in judgment; and such as are gentle, them shall HE teach HIS way." [I's. xxv: 8].

Are the people of GOD abused and trampled upon by unbelievers, who chance to outnumber them, and to occupy the seats of power? The evil complained of can only be for a brief season. "The LORD setteth up the meek, and bringeth the ungodly down to the ground." [Ps. cxlvii: 6].

Is the Church assailed by bitter and unrelenting enemies? The weapons of controversy, drawn from the armory of Truth, may be sharp and powerful, but far more effectual will be the warfare of those who, as St. Paul advises, "in meekness instruct such as oppose themselves," [2d Tim. ii: 25].

Has a brother been overtaken in a fault, which is bringing discredit upon our holy religion? Speedy and severe discipline might cut off the offender from the LIVING VINE, and cast him out to perish, but far more like the DIVINE MASTER will those prove themselves, who endeavor to "restore such a one, *in the spirit of meekness*." [Gal. vi: 1].

Does the world reproach us with lack of self-respect, in the inoffensiveness which marks our course? There is ONE whose estimate will be different. "The LORD taketh pleasure in HIS people; HE will beautify the meek with salvation." [Ps. cxlxi: 4].

Do those who hold official positions in the Church

of GOD, desire to act wisely and well? Let them always study to be meek.

An ecclesiastic who had caused much scandal in the Diocese where he lived, was prohibited from the performance of any holy office, and obliged to go into complete retirement from the world. The season for reflection was not lost upon him, and having besought GOD's pardon, he begged permission to ask that of his Bishop, also; but the counsellors of the Prelate, knowing how tender-hearted the good man was, tried to hinder the interview. After some time, however, the offender obtained the permission which he asked for, and implored the Bishop with many tears, to restore him once more to his office, and to allow him to set a good example where before he had occasioned scandal. And, now, it was the Bishop's turn to show his tenderness of heart, and he exclaimed, in words almost choked by weeping, "I also ask you, by the bowels of mercy of JESUS CHRIST, in whom we trust, that you have pity on me, and on every priest in this Diocese, on the Church, and on religion, on which your scandalous life throws dishonor. I ask you to have compassion on yourself, and on your soul, which you lose for all eternity!"

The spirit of GOD spake by the mouth of the meek, and the offending priest became a pattern of holy living.

Would Christians in the private walks of life, learn one great secret for securing happiness? It is by being meek.

A woman who had found much comfort in attend-



ing the church services, in Leicester, England, was scolded and threatened by her wicked husband every time she ventured to go. Having disobeyed him on several occasions, in this particular, he at last became so enraged, as to declare, with an oath, that if she ever went to "St. Mary's" again, he would be sure to kill her.

The very next Sunday, she sought GOD's direction in prayer, and proceeded to Church, as usual. On her return, the brutal creature was waiting for her, and said, in an angry tone, "Where have you been?" "To St. Mary's Church," was the answer.

The enraged man struck her such a blow on the head, that she fell to the floor; but as soon as she could rise again, she meekly turned the other cheek, and said, "Husband, if you serve this side the same, I shall bear it with patience."

Confounded by a spirit so remarkable, the man asked, in amazement, "Where did you learn that?"

"At St. Mary's Church," she answered.

"Well, well," said the man, now brought to a better mind, "if that is what you learn at St. Mary's, you may go there as often as you please!" Henceforth, she not only enjoyed her religious privileges undisturbed, but had the pleasure, not long after, of having her husband go with her.

Christian parents, do you wish to cultivate such habits and manners in your children as will not only secure GOD's favor, but help them forward even in this life? Teach them to be meek.

The gentle spirit which goes by this name has much

in common with politeness; and good manners are never thrown away.

Years ago, a poor widow at the south, had taken great pains to impress this lesson on the mind of her little son; and she had found him most ready to learn and practice it.

One evening, while milking her cow, she was much disturbed by a troublesome calf, and called to the boy to catch it, and hold it fast by the ears, until she had finished her task.

While mother and son were thus engaged, a wealthy planter rode by, and observing the intelligent countenance of the boy, he addressed him in a friendly way, in response to which a polite salutation was given.

"Why don't you pull off your hat, my little man," asked the stranger, "with such a graceful bow?"

"Why, sir, you see I am holding the calf, while mother milks the cow; but if you will have the kindness to come and help me for a minute, I will very gladly take off my hat."

The gentleman was so much struck with the shrewdness of the boy, and his respectful manners, that he proposed to the mother, to educate him at his own cost. The offer was thankfully accepted; and the poor boy afterwards became a distinguished lawyer. He was sent to the Legislature, then to Congress, and was finally chosen Governor of the State. This was George McDuffie of South Carolina.

Blessed are the meek, whether they be old or young, rich or poor; blessed in being thus like unto our LORD and MASTER.

Our comfort and our happiness, our success in life and our reward in Heaven, will all be affected by it.

I beseech you, therefore, "by the meekness and gentleness of CHRIST" [2d Cor. x. 1] that you will strive to be like-minded with HIM!

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY GHOST,  
AMEN. I thank thee, O Lord, for the many mercies which  
thou hast bestowed upon thy Church, and especially  
for the gift of thy Holy Spirit, which is the earnest  
of our inheritance.

## SERMON XXIII.

### HUNGERING AND THIRSTING AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS.

[FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.]

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Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness;  
for they shall be filled.—ST. MATTHEW v. 6.

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ABOUT a hundred years ago, an old building was pulled down in one of the cities of Switzerland, which had been a part of a Carthusian convent, occupied before the Reformation. A box was found plastered up in the wall, containing this prayer, which would have been a good one for any age of the Church. "O, most merciful GOD, I know that I can only be saved and satisfy THY righteousness, by the merit, the innocent sufferings and death of THY well-beloved SON.

Holy JESUS, my salvation is in THY hands. Thou hast inscribed my name with a pen of iron, in rich mercy, so that nothing can efface it, on THY side, THY Hands, and THY feet."

Happy will it be for us, when we can, sincerely and devoutly, offer up this prayer.

Three questions present themselves, which must be answered, in order to the proper unfolding of the text: What is meant by the term "righteousness?" What are we to understand by "*hungering and thirsting*" after it? and what the import of the SAVIOUR'S promise that those thus "hungering and thirsting" "*shall be filled?*"

1. The literal meaning of "righteousness," is *conformity to GOD'S laws*. It supposes a certain standard set up, and a fulfilment of its requirements.

Righteousness is nothing external, which can be worn as an ornament, or a covering, but it is an inward gift. Hence, St. Paul declares, "The righteousness of the Law is *fulfilled in us*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." [Romans viii: 4].

We have no power of ourselves, alone, to change our dispositions and desires; but we "are justified by the name of our LORD JESUS, and the SPIRIT of our GOD." [1st Cor. vi: 11].

The "righteousness" of the best among us, will be poor and imperfect, when compared with the righteousness of GOD, and yet, if marked by sincerity, and an earnest purpose of heart, to be conformed to HIS image, it will be approved and accepted in the BELOVED.

"As an infant is a man," remarks Dr. South, in explanation of this point, "because he has all the parts of a man, though he has them not in that bulk and strength that those have who are grown up; so is he righteous and sincere, who performs every divine precept, omitting no one of them, though his performance have not that perfection and exactness that is to

be found in the obedience of a person glorified and made perfect."

"Every one that doeth righteousness is born of GOD." [1st John ii: 29].

"Whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of GOD." [1st John iii: 10].

A celebrated artist once said of himself, that he passed no day without drawing a line. His object was not to make as many strokes as he could, but to forward and perfect his work. The Christian, in like manner, does not draw his lines at random. He has before him a model to imitate, as well as an outline to fill; and every successful touch conforms him more and more to the great Original.

Even when our lives *are* conformed, in a good degree, to the commandments of GOD, we have nothing whereof to glory. HIS loving kindness and mercy, must pardon the past; HIS forbearance, must make large allowance for our daily infirmities.

So weak and infirm of purpose are the most consistent Christians, that all must fall back upon the confession in the XIth Article of Religion, that "We are accounted righteous before GOD, only for the merits of our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

Thus much in answer to the first question proposed.

2. What are we to understand by "*hungering and thirsting* after righteousness?"

These terms are used to express strong desire. What wants are so keen, so constantly recurring, and so difficult to be appeased, as those of gnawing hunger, and distressing thirst? "The keenness of bodily

appetite, of hunger and thirst, was given us, in order that we might know how ardent should be the craving of our souls after holiness." This spiritual craving the psalmist felt, when he cried, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after THEE, O GOD." [Ps. xlii: 1].

Our SAVIOUR promised, among many other things, that this deep longing of the saints, alluded to, rather than described, shall be fully satisfied in Heaven. "They shall hunger no more," as it is said, "neither thirst any more. . . . For the LAMB which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water." And, it is added, "GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes," [Rev. vii: 16-17]; words which recall the form of the second and fourth of these Beatitudes, as St. Luke exhibits them, [vi: 21]; "Blessed are ye that *hunger* now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh." [Plain Commentary on the Holy Gospels, in loco.]

In our natural, sinful state, we have no desires after righteousness. The body, formed from the dust, and doomed to return to it again, would be willing enough to act upon the sensual maxim, "Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die." [1st Cor. xv: 32]. The brutes have the same desires, and our HEAVENLY FATHER feedeth them.

When, however, through the enlightening influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, we discover that something besides "making provision for the flesh," [Rom. xiii: 14], should be thought of by immortal beings, the soul

will hunger and thirst after pardon and holiness; after the means of grace, provided in the Church, on earth; and for the full and satisfying enjoyments of the world of bliss.

The desire for righteousness may not, at first, be strong and irresistible; but as labor in the frosty, bracing air, and exposure to cold and heat, quicken the bodily appetite, so will our spiritual exercises call forth stronger and more urgent cravings for the nourishment required.

To "*hunger and thirst* after righteousness" supposes that *we feel our need of it*. Experience must soon convince us that nothing else can supply its place. The starving traveller in the trackless desert, who quickened his pace, when he descried a bag lying in the way, cast it from him in disgust, when, instead of some common sort of food, it was found to be filled with costly pearls. The soul cannot subsist upon husks; and it must either be supplied with its own proper nourishment, or starve. No substitute can be found for righteousness.

To "*hunger and thirst* after righteousness," implies, also, that *it is often the subject of our thoughts*.

When the body is famishing with hunger, or fainting with thirst, how completely the mind is absorbed with the contemplation of this misery! The prisoner in his dungeon, the exile, the prodigal, will recall the days of prosperity, when they had "bread enough, and to spare;" and the sailor, on the briny deep, tossing on his hammock, with feverish delirium, would



consider the wages of years well laid out, for one cup of water from the cool fountains of his native land.

In like manner, if righteousness be estimated aright, the soul will long and languish for the possession of it.

To "*hunger and thirst* after righteousness" suggests the idea of earnest and unceasing endeavors to secure it.

"It was necessary for the patriarchs to fix their residence near a well," was the quaint saying of old Andrew Fuller; "and it is necessary for believers to fix their residence near ordinances." Need I say that the ordinance of prayer, private and public; the ordinance of preaching; the ordinance of Baptism and the LORD'S SUPPER, are all most important, if we would satisfy the cravings of the soul after righteousness?

A fainting man may often go to the well, but he is neither strengthened nor refreshed by this simple act of going thither. It is the cool water drawn up from its depths which quenches his intolerable thirst. And so, it is no mere formal waiting about the courts of the LORD, which can satisfy the soul; but the discerning of the SAVIOUR, in HIS own ordinances of grace.

To "*hunger and thirst* after righteousness" also implies a *healthy and uniform desire, as contrasted with a vitiated, sickly taste*. Real hunger and thirst are very different from the diseased and pampered appetite, which loathes plain and solid fare, and is only content with dainties.

The person who is heartily in earnest about religion, will need no unnatural excitement, or novelty, to keep his interest awake. The ordinary routine of the Church service will satisfy the soul "with marrow

and fatness," while the mouth praises the GIVER of all good, "with joyful lips." [Ps. lxxiii: 6].

3. One question more remains unanswered: What is the import of the SAVIOUR's promise that they who "*hunger and thirst* after righteousness, *shall be filled?*"

To be abundantly supplied with good and nutritious food is all that the bodily appetite can desire. The measure of righteousness, which the true Christian will long for, and strive to gain, will pervade his whole nature, and reach to the thoughts and intents of the heart. Slow as may be his advancement and discouraging his failures, he will never give over his endeavors to be transformed into the image of GOD, in righteousness and true holiness.

The magnetic needle may be shaken from its position by a rough jar, but resumes it again, the moment it is left to itself.

Absolute perfection need not be looked for in this world. Time is too short a summer for the soul to be ripened in it to that high degree.

"If an angel were sent from heaven," says John Newton, "to find the most perfect man, he would probably not find him composing a body of divinity, but perhaps a cripple in a poor-house, whom the parish wish dead, and humbled before GOD with far lower thoughts of himself than others think of him."

The blessedness promised to those who "*hunger and thirst* after righteousness" will only be fully attained, when sin and sorrow are removed from us, at our death, and we enter upon the joy of our LORD. It may seem a long while to wait for the fulfilment of

our hopes, but the reward will be abundant and satisfying.

While those foolish ones who have spent their lives in "hungering and thirsting" after temporal things, which perish in the using, have gone hence to reap the reward of their folly, and to drink of the cup of bitterness, forever; the child of God will be filled with good things, and will fear no future want.

"There shall we see His face,  
And never, never sin;  
There, from the rivers of His grace,  
Drink endless pleasure in."

Are *you* "hungering and thirsting after righteousness?" Do your fainting souls pant after God, as the hart for the water-brooks? If so, happy are ye. When those who have despised this righteousness, which you have so diligently sought to gain, shall be sent empty away, "ye shall be filled with all the fulness of God." [Ephes. iii: 19].

## SERMON XXIV.

### MERCY TO THE MERCIFUL.

[FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT.]

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Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.—St. MATTHEW v. 7.

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THE order in which the beatitudes are arranged, is, by no means, accidental. One will be found to follow very naturally after another, until the whole circle of Christian graces and virtues is complete.

He that has made himself acquainted with his own heart, will be free to confess his sinfulness, and sincerely to mourn over it. As soon as one has humbled his pride, and rooted out selfishness, he will be disposed to be meek and gentle; and the more that he hungers and thirsts after righteousness, the stronger will be his disposition to be kind and compassionate towards others.

The tender and sympathetic sense of another's woes, implied in the word *mercy*, is one of the noblest attributes of GOD, reflected, albeit, in an imperfect way, in us His fallen creatures.

*Mercy* and *Truth* are often coupled together, in the Bible, to indicate the *goodness* that precedes, and the *faithfulness* which accompanies His promises.

The Supreme RULER of the Universe is, of necessity, both a Law-giver and a Judge; but, in nothing does HE so much delight as in the exercise of mercy.

When the ALMIGHTY ONE descended in the cloud, and appeared upon the top of Sinai, which trembled and quaked at HIS presence, HE proclaimed HIMSELF as "The LORD GOD, merciful and gracious." [Exodus xxxiv: 6].

Instead of handing over the disobedient and thankless to the speedy vengeance which they deserve, the voice of a tender FATHER is heard, repeating the condescending offer, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD, and HE will have mercy upon him; and to our GOD, for HE will abundantly pardon." [Is. lv: 7].

Free as the sparkling brook, leaping from the mountain-side, from whose clear waters every thirsty traveller may be refreshed; free as the sun which gilds every mountain-top, and sends brightness into every vale; so free and all-pervading is the mercy of God.

As our HEAVENLY FATHER is merciful towards us, so would HE have us be merciful towards one another.

Here, the most abundant opportunities are afforded us, for imitating HIS perfections.

When Alexander the Great encamped before an enemy's city, he caused a light to be set up, as a token to those within its walls, that if they came forth

and surrendered, while that light lasted, the terms granted them should be liberal. If, however, they chose to hold out longer, no mercy was to be looked for.

Ah! how much more long-suffering is GOD, even towards the chief of sinners! HE not only sets up the light of HIS truth, as the beacon of mercy, but HE causes HIS offers of pardon to be renewed, again and again; and, that, through long years of perverseness, ingratitude, and wilful contempt. "HE hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our wickedness. For look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth; so great is HIS mercy also towards them that fear HIM. Look how wide also the east is from the west; so far hath HE set our sins from us." [Ps. ciii: 10-12].

When Victoria, at the age of nineteen, was called to reign over England, almost the first act which she was required to perform, was to sign a death warrant. The culprit was a soldier who had been sentenced to be shot for desertion.

The young queen looked sorrowfully at the death warrant, and said to the officer who presented it, "Have you nothing to urge in favor of this man?"

"Nothing," replied the officer; "he has deserted three times."

"Think again, my lord," said Victoria, with an anxious expression of countenance, very easy to be understood.

The officer was none other than the Duke of Wellington; the veteran of so many battles, who could not

find it in his heart to disappoint the queen. He accordingly good-naturedly remarked, "The man is certainly a bad soldier; but there was somebody who spoke of his good character, and he may be a good man, for aught I know to the contrary."

"O, thank you a thousand times!" exclaimed the youthful queen, and hastily writing "PARDONED," in large letters on the fatal paper, she sent it across the council-table, with a hand trembling with eagerness and tender emotion.

A beautiful beginning of a long and beneficent reign!

Let us now look somewhat more carefully into the nature of mercy, that each one may discover for himself whether or not he possesses it.

Mercy is much more than what is called *good nature*, and embraces the following particulars:—

1. And, first, *the merciful are always ready to forgive.*

Feeling themselves to be grievous offenders against God, they will not be harsh in dealing with those from whom they have suffered wrong.

What can the malicious, the revengeful, and the implacable expect, but that the LORD shall forget to be gracious towards them, and shut up His loving kindness in displeasure?

When a cruel plot was formed against Archbishop Cranmer, to take away his life, the providence of God so ordered it, that the papers which would have completed the diabolical purpose, fell into his hands, and the authors of it were discovered. One of these evil-minded men was an inmate of the Archbishop's palace,

and another was a man upon whom he had bestowed especial favors.

Cranmer summoned them to a private interview, and remarked that some persons in his confidence had disclosed his secrets, and even accused him of heresy.

Not suspecting that their own villainy had been found out, they expressed great abhorrence of such outrageous conduct; declared the traitors to be deserving of death; and, one of them went so far as to add, that if an executioner should be needed, he would undertake the office himself.

Struck with amazement at the perfidy of these hardened ingrates, the Archbishop lifted up his voice to God, lamenting the depravity of man, and giving thanks for his deliverance, and then produced the letters, asking if they knew them. Falling on their knees before him, they confessed their crimes, and implored his forgiveness.

Cranmer mildly expostulated with them on the evil of their doings, freely forgave them, and never again alluded to their treachery.

His merciful disposition was so well known, that it became a by-word, "Do my lord of Canterbury an ill turn, and you make him your friend forever!"

2. *Another characteristic mark of the merciful is patience.*

If we are merely disposed to be obliging to those who treat us with becoming respect, and to lend to such as can certainly requite the favor to the full amount, what do we, more than the grasping usurer, or the greedy miser, who has sold himself for gold?



When, however, one is willing to overlook slights and wrongs; to be patient under provocations, remembering how often he himself has tried GOD'S forbearance, he will be imitating the spirit of mercy, which the SAVIOUR expects us to cultivate.

There is, perhaps, no calling in life which requires more of this patience which belongs to mercy, than that of the *Teacher*. I take the word in its broadest sense, as including the instructors in schools, of whatever grade, as well as the office of teachers in the Church of God.

How much allowance mercy will make for slowness of apprehension, perversity of judgment, and the want of early advantages; for the crooks and crotchets of childhood, and for the piques and prejudices of age!

3. Again, *The merciful are liberal and open-handed*. Their ears are never closed against the complaints of real distress.

How can any stingy, unfeeling soul, claim to be a child of that gracious FATHER, who "is kind to the unthankful and to the evil?" [St. Luke vi: 35]. What evidence does he afford to the world that he partakes of the spirit of the Gospel, which is "full of mercy and good fruits?" [St. James iii: 17].

4. A fourth point which distinguishes the merciful is *that they are considerate*. Breaking down the narrow bounds of selfishness, they try to imagine themselves occupying the position of others who are less favored and happy; the sick, the needy, and the sorrowing.

It is by no means easy to bring the mind to this; and frequent impositions are apt to render one suspicious.

The truly merciful will be considerate, in spite of such unfortunate and disheartening experiences, and he will show a wise discretion both as to the *time*, and the *mode* of relief.

He will even anticipate the wants of such as are modest and backward in making known the extent of their sufferings.

5. Once more, I remark that *the merciful will show their tenderness of heart towards the brute creation.*

Rowland Hill used to say, in his quaint way, "I would give nothing for that man's religion, whose very dog and cat are not the better for it."

The philosophical John Locke has set forth a wholesome truth in his wise observation, that "they who delight in the sufferings and destruction of inferior creatures, will not be apt to be very compassionate and benign to those of their own kind."

The sanctions of GOD'S righteous law, [Exodus xx: 30; Deut. v: 14]; and the dispensations of HIS judgments, [Exodus ix: 19; Jonah iv: 11]; leave no doubt that cruelty towards the lower orders of creation will be noticed and punished by HIM.

Brutes, while lacking reason, are quite as sensible as we are, to physical pleasure and pain. They are made subject to man, and, within proper limits, he may exercise dominion over them.

He may employ them for labor, and use them for food. The various services obtained from them, imply certain obligations on our part. They are to be well fed and kindly cared for; and the merciful will be ready to stand between them and injustice.

Our SAVIOUR, in the text, not only enjoins mercy upon us, as a Christian duty; but HE also promises a reward for it: "Blessed are the merciful; *for they shall obtain mercy.*"

A poor Macedonian soldier was one day leading a mule, heavily laden with gold, belonging to Alexander the Great, when the weary beast was able to go no further. Instead of abusing it with horrible oaths, or beating it unmercifully, the man took the load off, and, with great difficulty, carried it a considerable way on his own shoulders. The King seeing him about to sink under the burden, cried out to him, "Do not be weary yet. Carry it to my tent, and it shall all be yours!"

Every kind and merciful action, which is prompted by right feeling, and not from the desire of vain glory, is like a good seed of grain, which will certainly spring up, and, in the autumn, will bring wholesome and pleasant bread for him who planted it.

Even amidst the awful scenes of the final judgment, our LORD assures us that the deeds of the merciful will be so many witnesses, testifying in their favor; so many eloquent advocates, pleading that mercy may be showed unto *them*. [St. Matt. xxv: 34, etc.]

Such is *mercy*, and such its *reward*.

Have we the disposition freely to forgive wrongs, the patience, the liberality, the consideration, the far-reaching benevolence, which characterize this grace?

If so, we have already tasted of the blessedness which mercy most certainly brings; and we shall be kindly dealt with by the ETERNAL JUDGE.

## SERMON XXV.

### PURITY OF HEART.

[SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT.]

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Blessed *are* the pure in heart; for they shall see God.—**St.**  
**MATTHEW** v. 8.

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No character, cast in human mould, ever can be perfect here. There will be spots and blemishes; faults and foibles in the best.

Some whom we regard as well nigh perfect, are, by no means possessed of every grace. There is something which plainly shows how "very far" our whole race is gone "from original righteousness," as our IXth Article expresses it, and that "this infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerate."

If there be any one grace more needful than the rest, in order that we may enjoy God's favor, it is *purity of heart*.

It will be time well spent which is devoted to this subject.

*Purity* is only another word for *cleanness, innocence, or holiness*.

Those whose *minds* and *motives* are, what they *ought* to be, may very properly be said to be *pure*.

A clean *heart*, will, as a matter of course, be accompanied by a clean *life*.

Purity (as our SAVIOUR uses it in the text) is not freedom from outward deeds of profligacy alone, nor a mere recoil from unhallowed thoughts. "It is that quick and sensitive delicacy to which even the conception of evil is offensive; it is a virtue which has its residence within, which takes guardianship of the heart, as of a citadel or inviolated sanctuary, in which no wrong or worthless imagination is permitted to dwell."\*

The frequent mention of *purity*, in the Bible, is enough to show its importance, and the need of possessing it.

"Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?" asks the royal psalmist; "and who shall rise up in His holy place?" The answer is at once returned, "Even he that hath clean hand and a *pure heart*." [Ps. xxiv: 3-4]. "Truly GOD is loving unto Israel; even unto such as are of a *clean heart*." [Ps. lxxiii: 1].

It is worth noting, in this connection, that one of the titles applied to our BLESSED LORD is that of "a PURIFIER;" because it is through the cleansing of His blood, alone, that any of the erring children of men can be made mete for the presence of GOD.

When St. Paul would give counsel to a Christian Bishop, as to what virtue it is most important for him

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\* Dr. Chalmers.

to possess, he writes, with impressive brevity, "*Keep thyself pure.*" [1st Tim. v : 22]. And, again, "Be thou an example of the believers in word, in faith, in *purity.*" [1st Tim. iv : 12].

Does St. James wish to impress upon the minds of Christians, that their religion, to be worth anything, must make them inoffensive, upright, and good? He begins his exhortation with the striking declaration, that "*the wisdom that is from above is first pure.*" [St. James iii: 17].

Would St. Peter show his hearty approval of the diligent efforts of GOD's true children to grow in grace? His commendation is grounded on the fact that they had "*purified their souls in obeying the truth.*" [1st Pet. i : 22].

Would St. John teach the extent, and the importance of the change which time, and trials, and faith, and prayer, must work in all our hearts? He simply says, "*Every one that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as GOD is pure.*" [1st John iii : 3].

And what a great work is to be understood as embraced in this! The *pure in heart* are they, who, through the gracious and ready help of the HOLY GHOST, have purified their hearts from pride, by the deepest poverty of spirit; from anger and bitterness, by meekness and gentleness; and from all wrong desires, by truly hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

The influence which such persons exert is great and beneficent. As ferocious natures are modified and tamed by contact with innocence, so the better instincts even of the most depraved, are drawn out and de-

veloped, by the approach of the pure and the good. The great EXEMPLAR of purity, while HE lived in this world, as a man, stood up, unsullied and unharmed, in the midst of the wickedness which surrounded HIM; the sensual being taught to curb the evil desires of the heart, and those who had been wedded to sin, to abhor it. His followers, in all ages and countries, whose hearts have been renewed by the power of the HOLY GHOST, have been, like HIM, (albeit, in most imperfect measure), the purifiers of a corrupt and evil world.

Well may our DIVINE REDEEMER describe the *pure in heart* as *blessed*; blessed in themselves, and blessed in the influence which they exert over others.

In order, now, that those among us who are endeavoring to cultivate this grace of the SPIRIT, may labor after a definite plan, it will be necessary to specify some of the safeguards and helps in this difficult task.

1. And, first, all who really desire to be pure in heart *must learn to exercise due control over the thoughts*. "As one thinketh in his heart (says the wise man), so is he." [Prov. xxiii: 7].

Let a man's outward acts be ever so unexceptionable, if his desires are fixed on evil things, and a corrupt imagination be suffered to go unrestrained, he is unsound to the core. The world may bestow upon him the title of a saint, and the short-sighted and unsuspecting, give him credit for perfection; but GOD who reads his inmost thoughts, will bring to light all his hidden impurity. How true is the pithy saying, that *man fell before he ate the forbidden fruit*. His ruin

was actually accomplished when he had set his heart upon it.

Do you wish to keep yourselves free from evil thoughts? Have the mind always occupied with good ones. As it is the empty and deserted house which collects dust and cobwebs, and becomes the abode of bats and birds, so does the Evil One force an entrance into every unoccupied mind, and fill it with unclean and debasing thoughts.

2. Again, those who would become pure in heart *will cherish a mortifying remembrance of past infirmities and sins.*

The effort to recall times and seasons, when Satan got the better of us, and when his well-arranged temptations proved to be irresistible, can never be pleasant, and will often be a sore trial; but if we are ever to become thoroughly disgusted with sin, and awake to the importance of being pure in heart, it will be by such a remembrance of the past.

It was while the poor publican caused his misdoings to come back, in all their naked deformity, and while he lifted up his heart-felt cry for pardon, that he was justified before God.

If we are striving hard to supply some bodily want, the consciousness of that want will never be lost sight of; and so, if we would attain anything like the character of the pure in heart, the memory of former sins and unworthiness must be ever before us. Hence, in the most touching supplication in which Christian people pour out their hearts, when they desire to come clean and pure to the LORD'S Table, they "acknowl-



edge and bewail their manifold sins and wickedness, which, from time to time, they have most grievously committed, by thought, word, and deed." Within sight of the INNOCENT VICTIM on the cross, they declare, in solemn earnestness of soul, that the remembrance of these sins is grievous unto them, and the burden of them intolerable; and thus are they led to form fresh resolutions to become pure in heart.

*Resolutions*, however, no matter how proper, and how sincere, will be followed up by those who are really in earnest.

3. *By a wholesome restraint and regulation of the desires.*

If a person wishes to know the state of his heart in regard to purity, he has only to watch the motions of his will and affections. Desire is, in fact, the pulse of the inner man. Objects of mental contemplation act upon the moral principle within, as Jacob's breeding rods did upon his flocks. The offspring of our thoughts will be pure or impure, according to the condition of our hearts.

Dr. Arnold, while Head Master of Rugby, used often to say, that it was his chief aim to cultivate in his pupils the habit of *moral thoughtfulness*. Whenever he accomplished this, he had helped them, very essentially, in their efforts to become pure in heart.

4. Once more, those who are sincerely anxious to acquire this important grace, *will shrink, with instinctive dread, from every thing which can sully, or defile.*

The conscientious Christian will always ask himself, "Can I engage in this business; or indulge in this pleasure; or make this change in my family arrange-

ments, without increasing my peril of being estranged from GOD?"

The man who has no wish to purchase the devil's wares, will be sure to keep away from his shop. To pretend to be pure in heart, or even that we *desire* to be so, is mere mockery, so long as people expose themselves to temptations, which, they have good reason to think, will prove fatal.

And, now, after all this care and pains-taking, to attain purity of heart, what is the advantage of it?

Our SAVIOUR answers the question in the text: "*Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see GOD.*"

This expression has reference to the custom of the East, where, as monarchs seldom appeared in public, a formal introduction to them was an image of high honor and happiness. It implies, also, that such as are permitted to see the face of the King, are his friends and favorites. The same idea is found in various passages of Scripture, as when our SAVIOUR declares that the guardian angels of little children "*always behold the face*" of GOD, in Heaven, [St. Matt. xviii: 10]; and St. Paul teaches that, although, now, our sight is dim and indistinct, we shall, hereafter, "*see face to face,*" [1st Cor. xiii: 12]; and St. John assures us that the followers of the LAMB, "*shall see His face*" [Rev. xxii: 3-4], when they are permitted to share in the glories of HIS Kingdom.

Even in this world, the pure in heart shall enjoy manifestations of GOD's glory. They see GOD in all the works of creation; in the wonders of redemption,

and in the various dispensations of His gracious providence.

They see GOD, in the secret chamber, when HE will draw nigh to them, as they call upon HIM in their prayers; and they see HIM in the ordinances of His House. Like Moses, they have near access to GOD; they "see HIM who is invisible" [Heb. xi: 27], and are comforted and strengthened by thus beholding HIM.

It cannot be denied that cases do now and then occur, even in this vale of tears, when dying Christians are cheered by beams of brightness from the better land. If this be not so, what can St. Luke have meant, when describing the martyrdom of St. Stephen, he says, "Being full of the HOLY GHOST, he looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and *saw the glory of GOD, and JESUS standing on the right hand of GOD?*" [Acts vii: 55].

Babes in CHRIST, as well as Christians of maturer years, have been strengthened for the death-struggle, by special manifestations of GOD's favor.

"Are you afraid to go, my darling?" asked a fond mother of her child, as its quick and labored breathing betokened that the end was near. "*No mother,*" was the prompt and cheerful answer, "*No mother, not afraid at all. I see a light. I am almost home!*"

Whatever differences GOD may choose to make, by granting such visions of future bliss, of this we are sure, that while none who are unclean and unholy will be received into heaven, *all* who are *pure in heart* shall see GOD. When our adorable SAVIOUR shall come with power and great glory, our organs of vision,

now so weak, will be strengthened to behold His marvellous perfections, and "*we shall see HIM as HE is.*" [1st John iii : 2].

May all of us so earnestly strive to be *pure in heart*, that we may enjoy this beatific vision in heaven!

## SERMON XXVI.

### THE CRUCIFIXION.

[GOOD FRIDAY.]

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There they crucified HIM.—ST. LUKE xxiii: *part of 33d verse.*

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“Am I a stone, and not a sheep,  
That I can stand, O CHRIST, beneath THY cross,  
To number drop by drop THY life-blood’s loss,  
And yet not weep?”

GOOD FRIDAY, the great and awful day on which the Christian world commemorates the sufferings and death of the REDEEMER, is, nevertheless, a *good* day, to us, because of the inestimable blessings thus purchased at so dear a price.

All eyes are turned, now, to the Victim upon the Cross, and while confessing our vileness and ingratitude, may we adore the unsearchable riches of that Divine love, which could provide this ransom for us.

Last night, in the Garden of Gethsemane, our blessed LORD watered the earth with HIS tears; while “His sweat was, at it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

We know, full well, that our SAVIOUR, as GOD, could not suffer, and yet, through the miraculous union of the two natures, human and Divine, in the one person of CHRIST, the agonies which HE endured were such as no finite mind can conceive of.

Well, therefore, does the Greek Church add this to the other points specified in the Litany, and besides praying to the DIVINE REDEEMER "by HIS agony and bloody sweat, by HIS cross and passion," supplicates HIS tender mercy by HIS "*unknown sufferings*."

The agonies of the meek VICTIM became so exceedingly acute, that one of the angelic beings, created by HIS own power, in the beginning, came down to the Garden to strengthen HIM.

A harder trial was yet to come. In the very midst of those terrible agonies, a company of Roman soldiers appeared, led by the traitor Judas, who approached his MASTER, with apparent kindness, and kissed HIM. This friendly sign was the one by which the wretched man had agreed to mark out the SAVIOUR, that, the soldiers might the more readily secure their prisoner.

With reverence, let us follow our MASTER to HIS trial. HE asked no favor for HIMSELF, but requested that HIS disciples might be allowed to depart unharmed. The soldiers bound their unresisting captive, and led HIM in triumph to the city. It was yet dark, and all was silence as they passed along its deserted streets.

JESUS was first conducted to the house of Annas who had once been high priest, and whose son-in-law, Caiaphas, now held that office. Although Annas

could exercise no judicial authority, there would be no harm in being able to quote his informal opinion, to the people, as there was no doubt that this would not be favorable to the prisoner. The shrewd old man began, accordingly, to question our SAVIOUR concerning HIS doctrine, but JESUS refused to put up any show of defence, or to furnish a ground of conviction to those who had already, in their own minds, doomed HIM to death.

From the house of Annas, the rude company soon proceeded to the palace of Caiaphas, where the Sanhedrim had, by this time, assembled. Some appearance of legal procedure must be preserved, in order not to shock public sentiment, and false witnesses were brought in to prove the guilt of JESUS, and thus secure HIS condemnation. Liars were found in abundance, ready to swear to anything which was desired of them, but the difficulty was, that the testimony of no two among them agreed together. Meanwhile, the SAVIOUR took no pains to expose their glaring falsehoods, nor to vindicate HIS own character or conduct; but "as a sheep dumb before his shearers, so HE opened not HIS mouth." [Is. liii: 7].

At last, the high priest, wearied with this unbroken silence, and discovering that there was no evidence on which a conviction could be founded, unless it could be drawn from the prisoner HIMSELF, determined to force a crisis, by putting HIM upon oath. "I adjure THEE by the living GOD," he said with solemn emphasis, "that THOU tell us whether THOU be the CHRIST, the SON of GOD." [St. Matt. xxvi: 63].

All were hushed in silence, awaiting the response of the SAVIOUR; for when this form of adjuration was used, a prisoner was forced to reply, or be placed under the curse of the law. JESUS, therefore, answered decidedly in the affirmative.

This, however, did not satisfy HIS enemies, since they were seeking for evidence to prove that HE was *not* what HE claimed to be, in order to secure HIS conviction; whereas, the miracles which HE had wrought in Jerusalem, during this very week, showed that HE certainly possessed DIVINE power. Our blessed LORD went on to claim for HIMSELF higher authority than the Jews ascribed to the expected Messiah, when the general exclamation arose, "Art THOU, then, the SON of GOD?"

"I am," was the prompt response, when a wild scene of triumph, execration, and violence followed; the high priest rending his purple robes, and crying aloud, in holy horror, "HE hath spoken blasphemies; what further need have we of witnesses," while angry voices shouted from every side of the crowded judgment-hall, "HE is guilty of death!"

The SAVIOUR was now left to be abused, and spit upon, and buffeted by the brutal company, in the court below; while the grave Sanhedrim determined what must next be done. They had pronounced sentence of death upon the prisoner, but this could only be executed by the consent of the Roman Governor.

Pilate usually lived at Cæsarea, but at the time of the Passover he came over to Jerusalem, with a strong



military force, to keep the multitude in order, having his head-quarters in the Tower of Antonio.

Day had now dawned, and thousands just awakened from their night's repose, had gone forth into the streets, expecting to share in the joyful festivities of the high festival, and were all unconscious of the proceedings which have just been described.

The Sanhedrim, as they hastened to make application to the heathen Governor, to allow them to destroy the Victim of their brutal hate, bethink them of another difficulty, not so easy to be settled. Should these sanctimonious hypocrites enter Pilate's house, they would be considered as legally defiled, and thus disqualified for continuing the celebration of the Pass-over. When the pagan Governor discovered what troubled their tender consciences, he good naturedly came out of the palace, and took his seat on a tessellated pavement in front of it; while the soldiers led the prisoner to a more private corridor within.

Pilate must have heard many things concerning JESUS, and he had probably come to the conclusion that HE was a harmless enthusiast, whom the Jewish authorities wished to put out of the way, for selfish reasons of their own. Thus inclined to favor the prisoner, he took his place upon the judgment-seat, and asked HIS accusers to state their complaints against HIM. They were evidently disappointed and provoked that Pilate did not at once sanction their proceedings, without inquiry, and sharply answered, "If HE were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered HIM up unto thee."

The Governor replied, with sternness, that they might take the prisoner, and judge HIM according to their own law, without troubling him any further with the matter. Dark, scowling faces, looked fiercer still, and men wearing the sacred robes of GOD's anointed priests, disclosed the secret purpose of vindictive hearts, by the significant words, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to *death*." [St. John xviii: 28-31].

We are not told that the Roman Governor laughed, but he might have been excused for doing so, when these gray beards of the highest Jewish council, went on to assure him that out of pure zeal for the rights of the Emperor, they had brought this dangerous person before his tribunal, because they had found HIM trying to pervert the nation, by forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and declaring HIMSELF to be a King.

Pilate could not behold the calm dignity, and even grandeur which sat upon the brow of JESUS, and believe HIM to be deserving of death; but the question of paying tribute to Rome was too delicate a point to be passed over in silence, and he resolved upon holding a more private interview with the accused. Retiring to the inner judgment-hall, he had the SAVIOUR brought to him, and asked, "Art THOU the King of the Jews?"

Instead of a direct answer to the Governor's question, our LORD said to him, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of ME?" to which Pilate retorted, with some warmth, that he was not a Jew, and could not discuss Jewish questions; thus

tacitly confessing that the political bearing of the matter was all that gave him any concern.

JESUS then declared explicitly that HE had a Kingdom; although not one belonging to this world.

"Art thou a King, then?" asked Pilate, gathering something of HIS meaning, and anxious to discover the extent of HIS pretensions. The SAVIOUR did not deny that HE was; but disclaimed all intention of meddling with earthly dominions. "I came into the world to bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth MY voice."

Pilate was a fair specimen of the man which the most enlightened sort of paganism could fashion, and such language as this was sheer nonsense to him. Hence his derisive question, "What is truth?" or, as Neander has paraphrased it, "Truth is but an empty name."

Without waiting for an answer, the Governor went back to the impatient multitude, and said, "I find no fault in HIM at all." [St. John xvii: 38].

A fierce vindictive murmur at once arose; and a fresh charge was brought forward, which would be likely to alarm the time-serving ruler. "HE stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place." [St. Luke xxiii: 5].

The mention of Galilee suggested a happy thought to Pilate's bewildered mind. Herod was Tetrarch of that district, and was now in Jerusalem, attending the Passover; and even if the case of the prisoner should occasion him some trouble, it gave Pilate no uneasi-

ness, since their relations to one another were not the most friendly.

So far from being offended, Herod was really glad thus to be brought face to face with the great Prophet of whom he had so often heard, and he hoped to see a miracle wrought for the gratification of his curiosity. The SAVIOUR's accusers had followed HIM, trusting that the barbarous wretch who had permitted the brutal murder of St. John, the Baptist, would now yield to their demands for the destruction of another victim. They, accordingly, urged their accusation with wonderful pertinacity, and Herod asked question after question, becoming, every moment, less disposed to befriend the prisoner, because the calm dignity of silence was HIS only response. At last, when his patience was exhausted, he caused JESUS to be arrayed in a gorgeous purple robe, in ridicule of HIS royal claims, and having exposed HIM for a season to the cruel mockeries of the Roman soldiers, sent HIM back to Pilate.

The Governor of Judea was sorely perplexed, as the SAVIOUR was once more brought to his palace, wearing the purple robe, and a crown of thorns, which Herod's attendants had put upon HIM. Should he pay no attention to the political accusations of the Jewish rulers, he might get into trouble with his own government; while, on the other hand, he was not only convinced of the innocence of JESUS, from his own observation, but he had just been cautioned by his wife, who had been warned in a dream, "to have nothing to do with that just man."

His last resort for relieving himself from responsibility in the case, was by taking advantage of an old custom, which allowed him to yield up to the clemency of the people, any malefactor whom they might prefer. Vain attempt to shield the innocent! Even a robber and a murderer was better, in the eyes of the incensed rulers, than JESUS of Nazareth, and they demanded, with loud voices, the release of Barabbas.

"What will ye, then, that I shall do unto HIM ye call the King of the Jews?" asked Pilate, in still greater perplexity. The terrific answer was, "Crucify HIM!"

Without a word of complaint, or remonstrance, the SAVIOUR hears HIS sentence, and the soldiers lead HIM forth. The purple robe is taken off, and HIS own garment thrown about HIS bleeding shoulders; HIS head still encircled with the crown of thorns.

The rude cross is already prepared, and it is borne by the meek VICTIM who is soon to endure such agonies upon it. Calvary, where the lowest outcasts were executed, was not far beyond the city gate; but too far for the SAVIOUR'S exhausted frame to carry that heavy burden. Even the cruel soldiers felt some compassion for HIM, and they compelled Simon, the Cyrenian, to help HIM with it. The cross is soon placed in the hole which has been dug for it; the unresisting VICTIM is fastened to it, with those cruel nails and spikes, and "the accursed tree" is raised upright.

"There they crucified HIM." Above HIS head an inscription had been fastened in mockery, giving the SAVIOUR the title by which HE had called HIMSELF, "THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Prophecy after prophecy was fast fulfilled, in each new insult offered to HIM, and in the words which were spoken in the extremity of HIS agonies. The world knew not that the sins of countless myriads were receiving their punishment in the person of the spotless "LAMB of GOD;" but the sun was darkened; the earth shaken to its centre; and the dead came forth from the grave.

At the very hour, when, for so many generations, the Jewish priests had offered the evening sacrifice, in the Temple, the great HIGH PRIEST and INTERCESSOR, breathed out HIS soul, on the cross; thus making, "by HIS one oblation of HIMSELF once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world."

"Then was the veil of the Temple rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the GOD who, since Moses' day, had dwelt in the Holy of Holies, amid the mysterious Shekinah, came forth through the great rent, which disclosed to all who should seek the knowledge, the hitherto impenetrable secrets of the Divine counsels. Forth came the GOD of Israel, and, in no less mysterious form, yet nearer far to us, as flesh and blood, appeared in the outer world. You may see HIM, if you have faith, passing forth in the form of a man, along the Dolorous way to Calvary. You may see HIM, if you have faith, nailed upon the cross. You may see HIM, if you have faith, hanging lifeless upon the tree, with a mysterious stream

of blood and water flowing from a spear-wound in His side." \*

The SON of GOD was crucified for *us*, and it will be our own fault if we are not saved by the merits of His precious death.

Let us lift up, then, more heartily than before, the importunate appeal, "By THY Cross and Passion, good LORD, deliver us!"

Far better for us never to have been redeemed at all, than to live in the wilful commission of sin; since, for such wilful disobedience, no more sacrifice remains. The greater value we set upon the work which CHRIST JESUS has accomplished for us, the more shall we hate the sins which added to the weight of His sorrow, and the bitterness of His cup.

Love, and not slavish fear, should draw us to HIM, and make us faithful in our service. Let us open our hearts to the attractions of the Cross. Let us cry aloud to HIM, who is mighty to save—

"Lord, on the Cross THINE arms were stretched  
To draw us to the sky;  
O, grant us then that Cross to love,  
And in those arms to die!"

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\* Odenheimer's "Jerusalem and its Sacred Localities," p. 187.

## SERMON XXVII.

### THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS, THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY.

[EASTER.]

---

They knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead.—ST. JOHN XX. 9.

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How many thankless thousands, derive present *good*, and present *enjoyment*, from the time-honored arrangements of the Church, without *knowing*, or, at any rate, *acknowledging*, that they are indebted to *her* for these benefits! What child, even, does not recognize Christmas, and Easter, and Whitsuntide, as dear familiar names?

Master and servant, old and young, rich and poor, rejoice at their yearly return. But how *few* take time to think that these glorious Festivals were kept by the Church, when the Apostles Paul, and Peter, and John preached, and wrote; that they have been celebrated throughout the wide world ever since; that her overpowering influence has engrafted their names upon the laws of nations, making them the great landmarks in



the track of time; and that the indestructibility of the Church is a pledge and proof that these Holy-days will be remembered and honored upon earth, long after every thing of man's devising shall have crumbled into nothingness.

What a striking contrast between the gloom and sadness of Good Friday and the sunshine and joy of glorious Easter! It is but the third day since we beheld our BLESSED LORD expiring, in agony, on the Cross. It was only last night that we sat watching by HIS tomb, in the rich man's garden. Early on this Easter morning, just as the gray dawn began to open into gold upon the hill-tops of Palestine, HE burst the bars of death, and came forth, a mighty Conqueror. We have an *assurance* in this, my friends, of what shall happen to *all* of us, at the last. "At the sound of HIS approaching footsteps, every grave shall open; as did *some* when HE was crucified. From a thousand valleys, and from ten thousand hill-sides, the sound of shaking shall be heard. Like the bursting grass in spring, the buried shall break forth. *How glorious is Easter!*" [Bp. Doane's Sermons.]

I shall confine myself to the single point presented in the text: *the reasonable expectation which the types and prophecies of the Old Testament excited in regard to the resurrection of our blessed LORD.*

St. John accounts for the backwardness of the Disciples to believe that their MASTER had risen, by their *ignorance* of these predictions. "They knew not the Scripture, that HE must rise again from the dead."

Our LORD had spoken to them more than once of

HIS death and resurrection, and yet they do not appear to have realized what HE meant. It seems strange to us that this should have been the case; but we are expressly told that on one of those occasions when HE had referred to the subject, "they questioned one with another what the rising from the dead should mean." [St. Mark xix: 10.] When our SAVIOUR began HIS ministry in Judea, the doctrine of the Resurrection was received as an article of Faith, by the whole mass of the Jewish nation, with the exception of the sect of the Sadducees. The MESSIAH was to make this hope of HIS believing people a *certainty*, by being HIMSELF "the first fruits of them that slept." [1st Cor. xv: 20].

GOD, in HIS mercy, no sooner began to encourage fallen man, to renewed efforts after holiness, by the promise of a Redeemer, than HE gave intimations, also, of HIS *resurrection*. This was *prefigured by types*. The case of Isaac is an example in point. When Abraham offered his only and well-beloved son, this act of faith and obedience shadowed forth the infinite love of our Heavenly FATHER, in giving up HIS only begotten SON as a sacrifice for sin. As foreshadowing the resurrection of CHRIST, we are told that "Abraham received him again from the dead as in a figure," or type, [Heb. xi: 19]; language which implies that the event was intended to be a prefiguration of the resurrection of the ante-type.

Again. The innocent Joseph, persecuted by his brethren, and, in *their intention*, killed; sold for thirty pieces, and confined in a dungeon, between two guilty offenders, typified the suffering MESSIAH. As Joseph

was raised up again, from this temporary degradation, and exalted to honor and authority, so was CHRIST to come forth from the prison of the grave, and take His place on the right hand of the Almighty FATHER.

Jonah, who was sent forth as a missionary to the wicked inhabitants of Ninevah, was devoted to destruction, in order to save his companions from death, and shut up for three days and three nights within the belly of the sea monster. That great Prophet of repentance, JESUS CHRIST, in order to save a guilty world, was doomed to death, and plunged for three days and nights in the heart of the earth; and yet, like Jonah, HE was miraculously delivered from the prison of destruction, and proclaimed repentance and remission of sins.

But what was thus dimly and imperfectly declared by Types, was plainly set forth in the Prophecies. Almost everything which happened to our Blessed LORD, while sojourning upon earth, would seem to have been the accomplishment of what had long been predicted. The Old Testament is full of references to HIM. HE has this in view, when HE says to the Disciples, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning ME." [St. Luke xxiv: 44].

"Thou shalt not find a story (says the learned Hammond), a riddle, a prophecy, a ceremony, a downright legal constitution, but hath some manner of aspect on this glass, some way drives at this mystery, 'Gon

manifest in the flesh.' Whenever you read Seth's genealogies more insisted on than Cain's, Shem's than his elder brother Ham's, Abraham's than the whole world besides, Jacob's than Esau's, Judah's than the whole Twelve Patriarchs; and the like passages which directly drive down the line of CHRIST, and make that the whole business of Scripture; whenever, I say, you read of any of these, then are you to note that Shiloh was to come; that HE which was sent, was on HIS journey; that from the Creation, to the fulness of time, the Scripture was in travel with HIM."

When GOD said to the Serpent, after Adam's fall, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; *it* shall bruise thy head, and *thou* shalt bruise his heel," [Gen. iii: 15]; the meaning is, that the MESSIAH, who, in the fulness of time, was to be "born of a Virgin," should be subjected to the same great adversary, by yielding to the power of death, and, afterwards, should rise again from the grave, thus, "through Death, destroying him who had the *powers* of death, that is to say, the Devil." [Heb. ii: 14].

In the opening of the Second Psalm, ONE claiming Divine honors, is heard to ask, "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD, and against HIS Anointed."

It would be absurd to apply this exalted language to David, or to any other earthly sovereign. All this was accomplished, when, as we are told in the Book of Acts [iv: 25-8], "Against the HOLY CHILD JESUS,

whom GOD anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever the hand and counsel of GOD determined before to be done."

Again; David, speaking in this Psalm, in the person of CHRIST, says, "I will declare the decree; the LORD hath said unto me, THOU art MY SON; this day have I begotten THEE." [Ps. ii: 7].

This is the language of that "Everlasting SON of the FATHER," whom David, in spirit, called his LORD; of HIM, who having by HIS resurrection, "overcome death," has been exalted as a King, upon the holy hill of Zion. [Ps. ii: 6].

That this is the true import of David's prophecy is plain, because St. Paul quoted the very words of the Psalm, in one of his discourses to the Jews, saying, "The promise which was made unto the fathers, GOD hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that HE raised up JESUS again; as it is written in the second Psalm, THOU art MY SON; this day have I begotten THEE." [Acts xiii: 32-3].

In the Sixteenth Psalm, some distinguished Person addressing the ALMIGHTY says, in view of approaching death, "THOU wilt not leave MY soul in hell; neither wilt THOU suffer THY Holy ONE to see corruption." David could not have had reference to himself. Who, then, is the person speaking in this verse? St. Peter thus explains it, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost. "The patriarch David is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. He spake, therefore, of the resurrection of CHRIST, that HIS soul

was not left in hell (the place of departed spirits), neither HIS flesh did see corruption. This JESUS, hath GOD raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." [Acts ii: 29-32].

St. Paul afterwards argued in the same way, saying to the Jews at Antioch, "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of GOD, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption; but he whom GOD raised again, saw no corruption." [Acts xiii: 36-7].

The Prophet Isaiah describes the MESSIAH as "stricken for the transgressions of the people; cut off from the land of the living; and pouring out HIS soul unto death." But suddenly the scene changes, and this suffering SAVIOUR appears as a conquering Prince. "Who is this," asks the Prophet, "that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in HIS apparel, travelling in the greatness of HIS strength?" The MESSIAH answers, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save."

Again, the Prophet asks, "Wherefore art THOU red in THINE apparel, and THY garments like him that treadeth the wine-fat?" The reply is, "I have trodden the wine-press alone; and of the people there was none with ME. . . . I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold; therefore, MINE own arm brought salvation unto ME; and MY fury, it sustained ME." [Is. lxiii: 1-5].

Even while representing HIM as numbered with the transgressors, Isaiah speaks also of HIS resurrection,

"HE shall see HIS seed, HE shall prolong HIS days; the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in HIS hand; HE shall divide the spoil with the strong." [liii: 10-12].

Victorious over every enemy, the risen SAVIOUR then addresses HIS spouse, the Church, and assures her of a share in HIS blessedness. "Thy dead men shall live, together with MY dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." [Is. xxxvi: 19].

Such is a brief outline of the intimations which have been given in the Old Testament concerning the resurrection of CHRIST. The disciples, however, had either never heard, nor read; or, at any rate, had not *comprehended* this. They mourned, and gave up in despair, when JESUS was betrayed and crucified; because, as St. John tells us, "They knew not the Scripture, that HE must rise again from the dead."

This, however, seems quite plain to us. We have no doubts nor misgivings. With all the assurance of holy Paul, we can boldly say, "Now is CHRIST risen from the dead;" . . . and, "as in *Adam* all *die*, even so in CHRIST shall all be made *alive*." [1st Cor. xv: 20-22].

Nevertheless, a strange and mysterious feeling creeps over us, when we think of the world of spirits, the intermediate state. We all feel an interest in it, not only because all of us must go there at the last, but because we all have friends there now, awaiting our coming. They are not *entirely* removed from us; and we still seem to hold communion with them.

“I love the dead;  
And fondly doth my fancy paint  
Each dear one, washed from earthly taint:  
By patience and by hope made a most gentle saint.

I bless the dead!  
Their good, half-choked by this world's weeds,  
Is blooming now in Heavenly meads,  
And ripening golden fruit of all those early seeds.”

You may regard all this, my friends, as only dim visions of a far-off, shadowy land; a land about which you do not care to occupy your thoughts. But true it is, that with hasty steps, we are travelling towards it. Think not, however, that it will prove a region of enjoyment to *all*. The promise of GOD, stretched to its utmost limits, is only this: “Blessed are *the dead who die in the Lord*.” [Rev. xiv: 13].

There will be no long sleep in the grave. “The hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the SON of GOD, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” [St. John v: 28, etc.].

*Which* are you doing: good, or evil? If we are humble and consistent members of CHRIST's Church, we may take great comfort to ourselves, this day, in HIS own gracious promise, “Because *I* live, *ye* shall live also.” [St. John xiv: 19]. In partaking of the Holy Communion, on this glorious Festival, we are brought into closer fellowship with HIM, WHO “by HIS death hath destroyed death, and by HIS rising to life again, hath restored to us everlasting life.” [Communion



Office]. "The joy of Easter nestles in the grave. It teaches us, to see it, as it is. We see where JESUS lay. Look at it steadily, in the clear light of Easter; and what is it? No place of doubt. No place of fear. . . . If we have *walked* with JESUS, we but *rest* with HIM. It is the gate through which HE passed into Paradise. And, if we have followed HIM in life, we shall but go after HIM, in death, to the green pastures, where HE refreshed HIMSELF, from Calvary; and to the still waters, where HE found comfort from the Cross." [Bp. Doane's Works, vol. iii., p. 261].

## SERMON XXVIII.

### THE REWARD OF THE PEACE-MAKERS.

[EASTER MONDAY.]

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Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.—ST. MATTHEW v. 9.

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A NOBLE *reward* is here promised for the performance of a noble *work*. *Likeness to God* is to be the recompense of the *peace-makers*.

The first and best of Peace-Makers was our blessed LORD HIMSELF. "The waves of this troublesome world ceased to toss themselves, and a delightful calm seemed to forebode the approach of those halcyon days, when the PRINCE of PEACE should make HIS abode amongst us; like the stillness of that hallowed night on which the angelic choir descended to sing 'Peace on earth;' peace with GOD, by the pardon of sin; peace with ourselves, by the answer of a clear conscience; peace with one another, by mutual charity."\*

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\* Bishop Horne's Discourses.

The object of CHRIST'S coming into the world was to be a PEACE-MAKER.

"This MAN shall be *the Peace*" is the Prophet Micah's account of HIM, [v: 5]; and the Psalmist describes the benign and gracious influences of HIS reign under the beautiful poetic image of the loving embrace of Righteousness and Peace. [Ps. lxxxv: 10].

The whole life of our blessed LORD was a constant and complete fulfilment of these predictions concerning HIM; and the preaching of HIS Apostles was but a repetition of HIS own Heavenly precepts as a Peace-Maker.

What pomp and pageantry of earth could so move the heart as that touching example of the peace-maker busy at his work, once witnessed in the Ephesian Church? The beloved Apostle, St. John, his head white with the frosts of a hundred winters, and with energies too much impaired to engage in active labors, as before, was wont, on each occasion of public worship, to rise up from his seat in Church, and looking around upon the Christian assembly, the oldest members of which might call him *father*, and, in faltering accents repeat the lesson which had been acted upon throughout his blameless life, "*Little children, love one another.*" The office of the peace-maker is a gracious and beneficent one, let it be exercised where it may.

It is taken for granted, of course, that the proper time is selected for the purpose, and the ordinary dictates of prudence are observed.

Solomon certainly never showed his worldly wisdom

more plainly, than when he said, "He who meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one who taketh a dog by the ears." [Prov. xxvi: 17]. Uncalled for interference seldom leads to good.

Our blessed LORD, the DIVINE Peace-Maker, while HE healed the bickerings and contentions in HIS own family, when requested to take part in a strife which did not belong to HIM, wisely answered, "Who made ME a judge or a divider over you?" [St. Luke xii: 13-14].

The true peace-maker, while he deplores the strife, remembers that interference in the moment of irritation, will kindle, rather than put out, the fire.

HE patiently waits for the first moment of favorable remonstrance, and has the satisfaction of beholding the fulfilment of the words of the wise man, "a word spoken in due season, how good is it!" [Prov. xv: 23].

With this precaution, I shall go on to mark out three distinct fields of usefulness in which the sincere and honest peace-maker may find abundant occupation.

1. And, first, he may accomplish much good *by striving to promote harmony in the State.*

"A greater curse cannot befall the most wicked nation," Lord Clarendon has well remarked, "than to be deprived of peace. There is nothing of real and substantial comfort in this world but what is the product of peace; and whatsoever we may lawfully and innocently take delight in, is the fruit and effect of peace."

Language can hardly describe the evils which may

spring up under the best earthly government, when a murmuring, discontented, and turbulent spirit is suffered to go unrebuked.

Blessed are they who by wise counsels, and wholesome influence, are enabled to change the din and disturbance of battle, into the gentle calm of well-established peace.

They are worthy instruments of good in the hands of that ALMIGHTY BEING, who "maketh wars to cease in all the world, who breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder, and burneth the chariot in the fire." [Ps. xlvii: 9].

It is, however, not in the *State*, alone, that work is provided for the peace-maker. He will find ample scope for wisdom, and prudence, and prayerfulness,

## 2. *In the Church.*

Although, as a DIVINE INSTITUTION, the combined efforts of men and demons can never prevail against it, still, its growth and prosperity may be seriously hindered, by internal feuds. Indeed, these are often much more to be dreaded than the open and violent assaults of foes from without.

Benign and heavenly is the character of those who, when such unfortunate emergencies arise, put forth every effort to calm the fierce excitement, and quench the smouldering fire.

John Dickinson, of Birmingham, usually went by the name of the *peace-maker*, and such was his anxiety to keep the bonds of friendship unbroken, and to heal the breach when made, that he would stoop to any act

but that of meanness, and make any sacrifice but that of principle, in order to accomplish his end.

So high was the estimate put upon his character that he was often called upon to act as umpire in cases of arbitration, and it was very rarely, indeed, that the righteousness of his decisions was impeached. On one occasion, two angry men were disputing in a public house about the result of some matter in which both felt a deep interest, when a third asked, "Had John Dickinson anything to do with it?" "Yes," was the reply. "Then all was right, I am sure," said one of the contending parties; and, in this opinion all agreed, and the noisy disputation ceased.

Happy the Christian congregation, which possesses even one such a man as this! The influence of the peace-maker will heal many a threatening breach, and furious antagonists will be persuaded to throw down their arms, and unite in the conflict for the LORD and HIS Kingdom, against the hosts of the mighty.

*"Peace be within thy walls!"* was the royal psalmist's heart-felt prayer for Zion; and, in Apostolic days, while the Church had *peace*, her members walked in the fear of the LORD, and in the comfort of the HOLY GHOST, and were edified. [Acts ix: 31].

It was the note of preparation for a reverse of fortunes, and disastrous times, when St. Paul wrote to his Corinthian converts, in bitterness of soul, "I hear that there are divisions and contentions among you," [1st Cor. xi: 18]; and he might have added as the secret cause of all, "The enemy bath done this!"

And this enemy, the Devil, as Archbishop Leighton

has quaintly expressed it, "is no fool, for he works to his own end very wisely. There is not one thing that doth on all hands choke the seed of religion so much, as thorny debates and differences about itself."

When peace-makers more abound, then will Christians be of one mind, and that the mind which was in CHRIST JESUS.

Besides the wider sphere for the labors of the peace-maker, in the State, and in the Church, he will find much to occupy him,

### 3. *In his own family circle.*

When the elder members of a household are disposed to sacrifice personal gratification, for the sake of peace, the example will not be thrown away. Children and servants are not so much affected and influenced by direct and positive commands, as by observing the consistent conduct of those who strive to practice the things that are lovely and of good report. A plant may grow more rapidly under the forcing process of the hot-bed, but its strength and vigor will not compare with that of others which have enjoyed the genial influences of the spring.

Nor is it parents and guardians, alone, who can exhibit the sweet character of the peace-maker.

The older children of a family may instruct the younger ones in heavenly things, and show them the evil of giving way to their stubborn and unholy wills.

A little child who follows peace himself, and who desires to be a peace-maker, may find many fitting occasions for accomplishing this blessed work.

So much for the work of the peace-maker.

And, now, a few words, in conclusion, concerning his reward. "*Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.*"

The phrase "*to be called,*" in this, and other passages of Scripture, means really "*to be,*" and it is so expressed according to the Hebrew way of speaking. The peace-makers shall be recognized by the ALMIGHTY as HIS peculiar people. They shall be happy in being like unto GOD, who is called "*the GOD of peace,*" and happy in that inward peace, which HE alone can give.

And what privilege could possibly be greater than this? If, by being peace-makers, we are the children of GOD, HE is our Father.

HE feels the tenderest affection for us; watches over our interests; provides for our wants; and protects us from harm.

Every temporal blessing which it will be safe for us to possess, HE will freely and gladly bestow. When chastisements are needed, they will always be tempered with mercy.

If you have hitherto thought it a small matter, my friends, that your influence should be exerted on the side of peace in the *State*, the *Church*, and in your own *family*, let me now undeceive you. Should all Christians make up their minds to attend exclusively to their own private affairs, and leave the world to get on as it can; and should all be excused from disagreeable duties, on the ground of morbid sensitiveness, when would discord and division end?

What can be hoped for, unless some will be kind



and unselfish enough to pour oil upon the angry waters of strife? And what miseries may not society reasonably look for, if the efforts of the peace-maker should cease?

There is not one among us who has not an opportunity, at some time, to exercise this beneficent office. Aye, there are persons now present in God's house, who may do it to day.

May HE grant you grace to act this blessed part; to act it well and wisely, that the reward of the peace-maker may be yours!

## SERMON XXIX.

### PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE.

[EASTER TUESDAY.]

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Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake; for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in Heaven; for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.—St. MATTHEW v. 10, 12.

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“STARS are none the less glorious,” as has been pithily said, “though they have ugly names given them, as the bear and dragon.” “A saint’s reproaches are like a soldier’s scars, honorable.” [1st Pet. iv: 14]. “While men clip your credit, to make it lighter, they add to the weight of your crown.”

Persecution, in all ages, has been the portion of the good. From the time of Abel, whose righteous blood was spilled by the hard-hearted Cain, to the days in which we live, no conscientious, faithful child of God has escaped his share. The spread of the Gospel throughout the world, and the softening influence of civilization may change the *mode*, but they cannot put

an end to trials of this sort. St. Paul's declaration is as broad and emphatic as language can possibly be, "*All that will live godly in CHRIST JESUS, shall suffer persecution.*" [2d Tim. iii: 12].

To *persecute*, in its literal sense, is to *pursue*, to *follow after*. In the Scriptures it means to vex, oppress, or punish one on account of his religion.

This may be done by the use of abusive names, by the circulation of false charges, and by endangering life.

The leaders of persecutions have generally been notorious hypocrites, whose burning zeal has been lighted at the altar of worldly ambition; and no reasonable excuse can be made for them. Persecution, however, is one of the means by which even "the wrath of man" is made to advance God's glory.

It is even possible for a man to be ignorant of what he really loves most, until some severe trial comes; and the test has sometimes proved too much for those who had worn the garb of saints. Conscience has been put to silence, in the midst of its loudest reproofs, that they may remain warm in their houses, and safe in the possession of their estates.

There can be no question that the persecutions suffered by the early Christians, helped, in no small degree, to keep the Church pure; and unworthy motives could scarcely have had any influence in bringing over converts to the faith. Jews and Gentiles would be alike exposed to the fiery zeal of the infatuated religionists whose cause they ventured to abandon. Accordingly, we may fairly conclude that those who

in spite of national prejudices, family connections and associations, and personal interests, "heard the word gladly," and were admitted into the fold of CHRIST by Baptism, must have been generally sincere, and have taken this unpopular and dangerous step, from the promptings of an "honest and good heart." [1st Cor. xv: 19].

Such a profession would be accompanied with supplies of Divine grace equal to the emergency, and the probability that disciples who showed a resolution so bold and determined, would be drawn back again into evil, would be very much less, than in the case of those who lived under the mild and beneficent reign of Constantine. The Church *did* grow, in spite of persecution, and the growth was healthy and vigorous.

Dioclesian, the last and the worst of the Roman Emperors, who pursued the Christians with murderous hate, frankly confessed, that the more he sought to blot out the name of CHRIST, the more legible it became; and that whatever of CHRIST he tried to pluck up, it only took the deeper root, and gained a firmer hold on the hearts of the people.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that because the Inquisition has been so generally put down, and martyrs are no longer beheaded or burned, that the Church is free from persecution.

A very limited acquaintance with the workings of the world would show the reverse. It is certainly easy enough for a time-serving man who goes into a town to establish himself in business, to find out by personal observation and careful inquiry, which is the strongest

denomination, and where it will be best for his worldly interests that he should declare himself a member.

If such a cautious, trimming, selfish course be religion, the religion of the SON of GOD, a right-minded Christian would wish to have nothing to do with it.

Let a man of settled, well-grounded principles find himself living in a community where the Church is small, and in ill-repute; let him have the moral courage to scorn all considerations of popularity and patronage, when the interests of the soul must be weighed against the prospect of worldly gain; and you may rest assured he has in him the stuff of which martyrs were made, when the cruel fires of persecution burned with a fiercer rage. His faith must be built upon a rock. He *must* be sincere, when, in the Apostles' Creed, he professes his belief in the Triune GOD, and in "the Holy Catholic Church."

I quote from a missionary record, made in this year of grace, 1869, and that in one of the oldest States of our Republic, where freedom of religious opinion is supposed to exist without trammel or restraint, as an illustration of this point.

"At a little village, where not only every place of worship, but even the common school-house was closed against our people, the feeble flock, without money and friends, resolutely set about the erection of a little house of prayer, in which the services of the Prayer-Book might be celebrated.

The cost of the undertaking was much increased, because the hatred of the Church was so intense, that no mechanics in the place would help in its erection,

and when laborers were brought from long distances, people refused to board them. Patronage was so universally withdrawn from any one manifesting an interest in the Church services, that its members were reduced to positive suffering. Nothing daunted, these men went out, and hewed down the timber to be used, fashioned any portion of the building in their power, some of them watching night after night, beside the fires which were drying the plastering, defying the keen cold of mid-winter, in their eagerness to obtain a temple of God; and working all alike, the mechanic to the neglect of his trade, and the lawyer his books, until their eyes gladdened by the sight of the neat church, surmounting one of the most beautiful of nature's hills."

Many of our devoted, uncomplaining missionaries, could relate similar experiences, if they chose.

It is often much harder to be laughed at, than to be more roughly handled. Ridicule may seem a contemptible weapon, but it is one of great power. Happy the man who is so thoroughly established in his principles, as to be proof against all such assaults. One can no more exercise his reason, while living in constant dread of ridicule, than he could enjoy life, so long as he was haunted by apprehensions of death.

No matter how much foolish people may laugh at your religion, and your Church; it can only do harm to themselves. When a blind man runs against you in the street, instead of being angry with him, you merely say, "Poor man! he is blind!"

Admiral Colpoys, who rose to that high station by

his own efforts, used to relate, with no little satisfaction, that on first leaving his humble lodging to join his vessel, as midshipman, his landlady presented him with a Bible, and a guinea, saying, "God bless and prosper you, my lad; and, as long as you live, never suffer yourself to be laughed out of your money or your prayers."

He carefully followed this advice, and reaped the good of it.

The early Christians who proved their sincerity by the sacrifice of property and life, could have formed no conception of the state of society which we have lived to see. A very large class of those who profess to be followers of CHRIST, are merely the slaves of circumstances. Interest and convenience come first; right and conscience, afterwards. The ordinary man of the world who has enrolled his name as a member of *some* religious body (it matters not to him *which* it is), entertains no idea of self sacrifice, and every thing is weighed in the sordid scales of profit and loss.

The story of martyrs who suffered and died for principle, he regards as fine pictures in history; but it never enters his imagination that there are any representatives of such martyrs now.

A common form of persecution, in our day, is when hindrances are cruelly cast in the way of those who would gladly escape from the dominion of sin, and walk as children of light. When, in defiance of opposition and ridicule, the well-disposed man *does* decide for the truth, and *does* devote soul and body to God's service; what is it but the spirit of the old and

blood-thirsty enemies of the truth, which seeks to diminish the zeal, and cool the ardor of the new convert in the cause of CHRIST; a spirit which would not only rejoice at his backsliding, but leaves no effort untried to accomplish his ruin?

As cruel and inexcusable as such conduct would be towards any who, with honest purposes of amendment, have forsaken the ways of ungodliness, it is a still more aggravated offence when the young and inexperienced are made the victims of it.

How many unjust suspicions will be slyly expressed that their profession of CHRIST has not been sincere! With what avidity will the slightest deviations from the strict line of duty be watched for, and bruited abroad to the world! If silent and retiring, they will be charged with hypocrisy; of trying to seem better than they are. If cheerful and sociable, the charge of lightness and frivolity will be raised. Reverent behaviour in Church, and due respect for the ordinances of CHRIST, will be attributed to weakness or superstition. And so the spirit of persecution will tax its ingenuity to accomplish its devilish work. The Christian, whether young or old, may well afford to possess his soul in patience. When one of the noble witnesses of God's truth, was imprisoned for conscience' sake, in the reign of bloody Mary, he wrote to a friend, "A prisoner for CHRIST! What is this for a poor worm? Such honor have not all His saints. Both the degrees which I took in the university, have not set me so high as the honor of becoming a prisoner of the LORD."



There have always been fanatics in the world who have rather *sought* than *shunned* persecution. They may have been anxious for notoriety, or they may have imagined, in their madness, that injuries received on account of their religion, however provoked by their own obstinacy and irregularities, would secure for them the Divine blessing. Our SAVIOUR is careful to put HIS disciples on their guard against this miserable delusion, by assuring them that it is only when they are "persecuted for righteousness sake;" persecuted for doing their duty in the state of life to which providence has called them; that they can look for HIS favor and blessing. The odd and the imprudent who oppose as many rough corners as they can to the prejudices of the world, have no right to complain of ridicule and hard usage.

Our SAVIOUR and HIS Apostles, so far from courting persecution, used all ordinary precautions to avoid it, in cases where no principle was concerned. Whenever their rights, or their religion were, in any way infringed upon, they were resolute unto death. You will notice this proper distinction, in the emphatic clause of the text: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and *shall say all manner of evil against you falsely*, for MY sake."

It is no credit to have evil said of us when we *deserve* it; but if we are innocent, it may well be an occasion of rejoicing. That a merciful GOD should accept the sincere and hearty devotion of those who endure reproach and suffering, for HIS cause, would seem likely enough. The text, however, prepares

us to expect more. "*Great is your reward in Heaven.*"

Not only pardon and grace, but a *reward*, a *great* reward; a reward in *Heaven*.

Who can say that the hope of obtaining it is a wrong or unworthy motive, when the SAVIOUR HIMSELF has appealed to it as a reason for boldness and endurance?

## SERMON XXX.

### THE NECESSITY OF BECOMING CHURCH-MEMBERS.

[FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.]

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The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.—  
*Acts ii: part of 47th verse.*

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THE Church of CHRIST, which is partly militant on earth, and partly triumphant in heaven, is like a great and beautiful city standing on both sides of a river. There is only the narrow stream of Death which divides the land of grace from the brighter region of glory.

Very many who hope to be inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, shrink back from being numbered with God's people here. They urge the poor excuse that they are not fit for such a privilege, and thus they neglect one of the great means which the LORD has appointed to aid them in their preparation for a higher and holier life in heaven.

If you had made up your mind to take a journey to a foreign land, and the time was drawing near when you proposed to set off, you would be very diligent in

gathering information from guide-books, or from those who had actually gone over the same road before, and in preparing, and packing up your clothing, and whatever else you would need on the way. And now, my friends, let me remind you of another journey which you must take, and that, before very long; a journey, about making which, no one is asked whether he wishes to go or not; nor even whether or not he is ready. I refer to your journey to another world.

To those of us who try to be true and faithful members of GOD'S family, the Church, it is not a long way, nor an unpleasant one. The Church, on earth, to which we belong, is the suburbs of the great city, whose glittering walls and pinnacles, we discern by the eye of faith, beyond the swellings of Jordan. When the good LORD sees that we are fit to be removed thither, HE will send HIS angels to carry us safely over.

But all who listen to me, now, do not occupy this happy and enviable position. You have entered into no covenant with GOD; the death of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, for the redemption of a lost world, is nothing more to you than an historical fact; because you have secured no right nor title to any share in it. You have forgotten the rule which the ALMIGHTY has HIMSELF laid down; "The LORD adds to the CHURCH such as shall be saved."

Do you ask why HE insists on the observance of this rule? I answer, that one reason why the LORD requires that people should become Church-members is, that they may enjoy the benefits of wholesome companionship, encouragement, and support.

A traveller who is to take a long and perilous journey by himself, dreads both its loneliness and its dangers; and knowing that this feeling is common to all, it is most merciful and considerate, in our HEAVENLY FATHER, that HE allows us to make the pilgrimage to our eternal home, as one large and united family, composed of that great multitude who are enrolled under the banner of the Cross, and who are marching onward, a conquering and exulting host.

In thus "adding" them, day by day, to the privileges of Church-membership (as we are told in the text), it is plain that there could have been no long nor tedious process of preparation; for we read, that, on the first WHITSUNDAY, "*about three thousand souls*" [Acts ii: 41], were received into the Christian-fold, in the city of Jerusalem, alone. There must, accordingly, have been some simple mode, by which those who had thus far been strangers to GOD's family, were brought into covenant with HIM. What was it?

We are told, that towards the close of St. Peter's Sermon, on that memorable occasion, he said to the people, who had been aroused to a sense of their guilt and danger, by his plain and pungent preaching, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of JESUS CHRIST, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the HOLY GHOST. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off" [Acts ii: 38, 39].

And what answer did these people make? Did they say to GOD's minister, "We will go home, and consider this matter? We are almost too busy to think

of our souls, just now. We must take time to inquire whether it will give offence to any of our kindred, or friends, if we join the Church. We will wait, and grow better, and, the next time that you come this way, we hope to be ready." Did they answer after this manner; a manner so common in our day? What says the sacred historian? "Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized; and, the same day, there were added unto them about three thousand souls." [ii: 41.] They committed themselves to stand by certain principles, and to aim after a certain practice. And the blessed work went on. The new Church-members used their influence to bring others to the same manly decision, and "The LORD added to the Church daily such as should be saved." And what became of those who remained stubborn, and would *not* be "added to the Church?" Were they "saved," also? Was it no matter, for time, and for eternity, whether those people were "added to the Church" or not? Ah! my friends, how can we shut our eyes to the plain conclusion derived from the language of the text, that those who wilfully refused to come to GOD, in HIS appointed ways, were *not* saved? And did not our BLESSED SAVIOUR teach the same thing, when HE commissioned HIS ministering servants to go forth through all lands, preaching the Gospel, and baptizing, and added, with emphatic and startling emphasis, "HE that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned?" [St. Mark xvi: 16].

Unbaptized persons, living in Christian lands, where they could receive the washing of regeneration if they chose, have no promise of salvation while they remain in such a state. They are making light of the mercy of God. They are setting up themselves as judges, in opposition to His plainest commands, and are saying, by their conduct, that His ministers are insisting upon a needless thing. "O, ye unbaptized, too thickly interspersed among us, who have lived to maturity, or to old age, in neglect of this Sacrament, what doth hinder you to be baptized? How long will you stand like the heathen, with no covenant title to the mercies of God? Let this neglect and delay come to a close; and when, at the next administration of baptism, the question is asked, wilt thou be baptized in this faith? be ye here to answer, that is my desire." [Dr. Lewis on the "Confession of CHRIST," p. 66].

I have now shown you by what door of entrance all were received, when "the LORD added to the Church daily such as should be saved."

After the two lower orders of ministers, the Deacons and Priests had journeyed about, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, and had baptized old and young; then followed another sacred ordinance, most important to be observed.

I refer to the "Laying on of Hands," or Confirmation. This could only be administered by the highest grade of the ministry, at that day called Apostles; but since the death of the twelve chosen by our LORD, known throughout the world as Bishops.

Thus, we find in the eighth chapter of the Book of

Acts, that St. Philip, the Deacon, who belonged to the third, or lowest order of the clergy, preached with great success, and baptized; but it was necessary (as we are told in the same chapter) to send from Samaria to Jerusalem, for the Apostles to come down to administer Confirmation to the persons whom the zealous Deacon had received into the Church, by Baptism; that thus their privileges of membership, in CHRIST'S body, might be made complete. And so it has been, always, and everywhere, from that day until now. Go abroad where you will, throughout the whole Christian world, and you will find this beautiful and blessed rite of the "Laying on of Hands." In the remotest regions of the globe, and among people of every name and tongue, as in Jerusalem and Samaria, when St. Peter and St. John administered Confirmation in those cities, the Baptism of Christians is perfected and sealed by the Bishop's blessing, in this Apostolic ordinance.

Besides the gifts and graces of GOD'S good SPIRIT, which are then bestowed, so favorable an opportunity of coming out on the LORD'S side, brings to a decision, minds long wavering and unsettled, in regard to the well-being of the soul for eternity.

There are thousands of amiable, excellent people, who are making the vain attempt to serve GOD in secret. The world does not suspect them of it; and, yet, when no eye but that of the ALL-SEEING ONE is on them, they read the Bible and pray. They cherish a vague hope, that GOD will accept this secret service, even while they withhold from HIM that open confession,



in Baptism and Confirmation, which HE has made the bounden duty of all HIS people.

This timid, non-committal course, by no means comes up to HIS requirements. The ALMIGHTY demands the public confession of CHRIST not only because we thus pay honor to HIM, who is our only SAVIOUR, but because it imparts strength to our own-selves. "A purpose in the heart becomes more firm by being expressed, for what we have *said* we *would* do, we feel more strongly that we *must* do. It would be an immense advantage to multitudes, who are attempting to maintain this concealed service of CHRIST, if they could decide to come out openly as the avowed followers of the SAVIOUR. One breathes more freely when he has made this decision. He looks up to GOD with more confidence in prayer, and he receives a larger blessing from the GOD whom he is not ashamed to own. And a time of Confirmation is a favorable season for bringing indecision to a close. It is not administered at all times, like Baptism, nor frequently, like the LORD's Supper, so that one may say that if he neglects it now, it is only a month or so; but it comes at such wide intervals, that he feels it is more like rejecting CHRIST altogether, and that the question is one of neglect of duty for a year or years, which he cannot, therefore, so lightly dismiss." [Dr. Lewis' "Confession of CHRIST," pp. 98-9].

O, it is passing strange, that when all the offers which the good LORD makes to sinners, are merely for their own advantage, any should fail to accept them! When we are told, in the text, that the LORD

is daily adopting into HIS family, the Church, those whom HE will love, watch over, and bless, while they remain on earth, and save, with an everlasting salvation, from the misery in store for the careless and disobedient; how can any sit unconcerned, or be satisfied to leave their eternal interests unprovided for?

It is my earnest wish and prayer, my friends, that many of you may now be brought to a decision in regard to the most momentous question which can possibly engage your thoughts. I ask you, in GOD'S behalf, to come and be added to the LORD'S family, by Baptism and Confirmation.

One will answer that he is quite too busy; that he knows religion to be a highly important thing, (extremely condescending and patronizing the tone, and well-nigh insulting, when it is remembered that it is a neglected and despised FATHER, in Heaven, WHO is graciously inviting HIS erring creatures to save their souls from perdition); but that he has not a moment to spare for it now.

Another will say that he is almost in despair about himself, because he has been trying, for a long while, to become better; that he might feel warranted in uniting with the Church, but that he can discover no improvement in his case.

I have no doubt of this, my hearer; and the reason is that you have been making the foolish attempt to grow better, in your own way, instead of using the helps which GOD has provided for that end.

A third will respond to the urgent invitation of GOD'S minister, by the specious promise, that he means

to repent, and come unto GOD, at some future day. He thus substitutes *intention* for *act*; a thing well enough, perhaps, when we have neither power nor opportunity to act; but the most shameful mockery when we *can*.

A fourth holds back, because the step required is awkward, and hard to take.

So it is, my friends, if you feel no interest in saving your souls. When, however, one sets about the great work, in good earnest, and in dependence on GOD's promised help, every obstacle will be sure to vanish.

It is because people choose to remain estranged from GOD, that the difficulty of returning to HIM seems so very great. The real obstacle is in themselves. You must rouse yourselves up to action, my hearers, and, if you are truly wise, you will do it without delay. "Paul was lying in darkness and tears, when Ananias bade him arise and be baptized; the trembling jailor was baptized upon faith in a goodness preached to him by the Apostles." The Church says, "Tell me your *present* mind and purposes; if these be right, come forward. She desires us to profess our sorrow, our gratitude, our faith; but as for any profession of a great change that has passed upon us, of holiness that we have acquired, of steadfastness that we have gained, all such professions she frowns upon, and disallows. She desires not of the prodigal to declare how much better he is now, than he was years ago, but would rather hear his contrite exclamation, "FATHER, I have sinned!" [Bp. Lay.] No one need hope to become good in a short time. The work of

amendment, under the most favorable circumstances, will be a long one; but the LORD will help us to carry it on to perfection, if we but show a disposition to be guided and governed by HIM.

If those who were "added to the Church," by Baptism and Confirmation, in the days of the Apostles; and the countless multitudes, who, since that time, have, through these same appointed ordinances, sought God's grace, and *found* it; if all these redeemed ones now safe in Paradise, could speak to the timid, the time-serving, the halting and hesitating among you, with what persuasive eloquence would they endorse the teachings which you have heard, this morning; and how earnestly would they plead with you to lay hold on eternal life!

The same Church which welcomed *them* to her bosom, now opens wide her motherly arms to *you*! She invites the unbaptized and the unconfirmed to leave the unsheltered and comfortless common of the world, where the bleak winds blow, and where storm and tempest must be faced; and come to a home where safety and comfort may be found. Who, among you, will be so unwise, so rash, so thankless, as to refuse the gracious offer?

## SERMON XXXI.

### THE SIN OF PROFANE SWEARING.

[SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.]

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Because of swearing the land mourneth.—JEREMIAH xxiii. 10.

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ALTHOUGH so many thoughtless and irreverent persons indulge in profane swearing, and think it no harm; it must really be a great and dangerous sin; or the ALMIGHTY would never have taken the trouble to send forth a special command against it, as he did amidst the thunders of Sinai. Moreover, if people do not commit any offence against HIM, by using profane language, what could possibly be the meaning of the text? "Because of swearing the land mourneth!" Here you observe, that the very habit which is so freely and foolishly indulged in, the habit of profane swearing, is mentioned as the cause why GOD'S judgments were poured out upon the earth, in ancient days. And it becomes all, who thus venture to provoke the indignation of the high and mighty RULER of the Universe, to ask themselves whether the prevalence of this sin, may not be one great reason why our own beloved country

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has been made to pass through such dismal years of mourning and wretchedness.

To take GOD's name in vain, is to employ what is sacred and holy, for other than sacred and holy purposes; to deal with it lightly, and to treat it with disrespect and irreverence. Now all persons thus dishonor HIS holy name, and show contempt for it, who bring it into their ordinary conversation; to point a jest, or add force to what they say; or to fill up a gap which they find inconvenient to supply; or to serve as a safety-valve for violent or excited passions; or when, in moments of madness, they call down the Omnipotent ONE, armed with all HIS terrors, to curse their enemies, and avenge their fancied wrongs. What a contrast between this frightful irreverence for GOD's name, and the solemn way in which it is always referred to in the Holy Scriptures! The mention of that name should be carefully reserved, (as Sidney Smith has beautifully expressed it), "for stupendous affliction, poured forth in eminent distress, appealed to before grave tribunals, and pronounced with solemn devotion when the dearest interests of mankind are at stake. GOD has given us HIS name as a support to human laws, as a security to human happiness: it is so great and serious a possession, the use of it of such vast importance, that the law takes it to itself, and pronounces it to be an offence against the public to use it, but in prayer."

And what can possibly be more insulting to the DIVINE MAJESTY, or better calculated to arouse HIS fierce indignation, than the unholy familiarity with

HIS name, which is manifested by the profane swearer, every day of his life? The lisping tongue of infancy is heard giving utterance to this language of fiends; and with the old, the habit becomes so confirmed, that the third commandment of the decalogue is broken almost unconsciously; although, by no means, not without guilt. Others, again, who would be shocked to indulge in this open and undisguised form of profaneness, sin against God, by swearing by HIS attributes of Mercy, and Goodness, or by speaking HIS name thoughtlessly, in seasons of surprise or anger. Boys and young men are apt to regard it as an evidence of pluck and courage to interlard their language with oaths, and the miserable vice extends to all classes in society, and to every occupation of life.

We crave your patience while we present a few plain considerations, why every one ought to abandon so dangerous a practice.

1. The first reason which we give is, that there is no use in it. As good Bishop Griswold was wont to say, "Profane swearing is the only unbaited hook which the devil fishes with." It makes no one wiser, or richer, or happier. Deception, and knavery, and theft, and drunkenness, and murder, may be resorted to, under the expectation of temporal gain, or for the hope of short-lived enjoyment; but for the sin of profaneness, there is no such temptation nor apology. The greatest and most perplexing employments of life may be carried on, without the use of one profane word. When Sir Christopher Wren was engaged in building St. Paul's Cathedral, he caused a notice to be

put up in different parts of the sacred edifice, informing the workmen, that all who were guilty of "the ungodly custom of swearing," should be instantly dismissed from his employ. And so, the top stone of this glorious temple was carried safely to its place, without the aid of the profaners of GOD's name.

An erroneous opinion has prevailed, that sailors and soldiers could never be kept in order, and made to do their duty, unless their officers had the privilege of swearing at them! Many examples, from land and sea, might be cited, to show the absurdity of this notion. A few must suffice. An English merchant, in fitting out a ship for India, told the captain that there must be no swearing among the crew, during the voyage. The captain did not object to the arrangement; but simply expressed his fears that a habit which had become a second nature to seamen, might not be so easily cured. "And how can I break off myself?" asked the honest man. "I will take care that you are reminded of your duty," said the owner; "Wear the ring that I will give you, and let the law of the vessel be explicitly known." Accordingly, he produced a ring for the captain, with this motto engraved upon it, "Swear not at all." The ship soon sailed, and, in due course of time, came safely back. On being inquired of respecting the subject, the supercargo declared, that with the exception of the first twenty days after leaving England, there had been no profaneness on board during the voyage. By this time, the old habit was completely destroyed, and the success of the experiment was complete. Besides



other good things which Colonel Gardiner accomplished, while serving in the English army, he put an end to profane swearing among the officers and soldiers under his control, showing what a Christian officer may accomplish, when he sets himself about it.

General Washington, in one of the "orders" issued for the direction of the American army, remarks that "The name of that BEING, from whose bountiful goodness we are permitted to exist and enjoy the comforts of life, is incessantly imprecated and profaned, in a manner as wanton as it is shocking. For the sake, therefore, of religion, decency, and order, the General hopes and trusts that officers of every rank will use their influence and authority to check a vice which is as unprofitable as wicked and shameful."

When our newspapers, some years ago, were giving us the first reports of General Taylor's victory at Buena Vista, they represented the old hero as using many rough oaths, while sending out his directions for the battle, or in response to those who brought him tidings of its successful progress. It was shocking to hear Christian men trying to apologize for such profaneness, as an almost necessary accompaniment of seasons of excitement and peril. Months afterwards, when the General happened to see some of the newspaper accounts for himself, he quietly observed that, however badly he might have managed his tongue, at other times, he hoped that when the God of battles showed him such special favor, he had not ventured to use HIS name profanely.

If captains of ships, and commanders of armies, can

manage sailors and soldiers without resorting to profane language, surely, no one else has any excuse for thus violating GOD's sacred law.

2. Another reason for refraining from profane swearing is, that it is a flagrant breach of good manners.

A person well-bred will not, intentionally, speak harshly in the presence of those whom he loves. The same rule ought to hold good in regard to using the name of GOD profanely: a BEING whom all right-minded people reverence and adore. No gentleman, in his senses, will give utterance to anything so low and vulgar as an oath. Long years ago, Mr. John Howe, being at a dinner with some fashionable people, one of the company had a great deal to say in praise of Charles the First, and made some very severe remarks about his enemies. Mr. Howe, observing that he mixed many horrid oaths with his discourse, ventured to suggest that he had omitted a distinguishing excellence in the character of that unfortunate prince, and being requested to mention what it was, he quietly answered, that King Charles carried his politeness so far, that he was never known to swear an oath in common conversation. The reproof was taken in good part, and was never forgotten.

Another illustration which we have to offer, relates to one greater and better than any crowned head. While Washington was President of the United States, he was presiding one day, with his accustomed grace and dignity, at the head of his own table, when a guest made himself very conspicuous by his frequent use of profane language. At last, the General could

restrain himself no longer, and deliberately laying down his knife and fork, he said in a decided tone, and looking at the transgressor as he spoke, "I thought we were all gentlemen here!"

Of course, the swearing ceased.

3. We insist in the third place, that profaneness should be stopped, because it is unkind and cruel.

How often, in travelling in public conveyances, are ladies, and Christians of refined and tender sensibilities, to say nothing of clergymen, obliged to sit in uncomplaining silence, while some thoughtless fellow-passenger shocks and startles them by profaning the name of the ALMIGHTY FATHER, and of that adorable SAVIOUR, who bought us with His blood! I say this is done by thoughtless persons, for I can hardly believe that, if they gave a moment's reflection to the subject, they would be thus unkind and cruel.

The celebrated Dr. Mason, being once on a journey, in a stage-coach, was exceedingly annoyed and distressed by the profaneness of an officer, who, in other respects, was a very agreeable man. When the passengers stopped for dinner, the doctor called the officer aside and remarked: "I am sure you are not aware of it, sir; but, during our ride this morning, you have repeatedly mentioned the name of a dear Friend of mine, in a most disrespectful way, and I beg, as a special favor, that you will not continue thus to wound my feelings." The officer expressed great surprise, and insisted that he was not conscious of having indulged in any personality. "Yes, yes," replied his fellow-traveller, "you blasphemed the name

of my Heavenly FATHER, than whom I have no dearer friend!" It was a word spoken in season. GOD grant that this sermon may prove to be such a timely warning!

4. Again, we enter a protest against profane swearing, because it is sinful. The simple fact, that GOD forbids it, settles this point at once. See Exodus xx. 7, Levit. xxiv. 16, Hosea iv. 2, 3, Jer. xxiii. 10, St. Matt. v. 34-37, St. Matt. xxiii. 16-23, St. James v. 12, and other similar passages.

Many a man who would be terribly shocked at the idea of robbing a house, or committing murder, will utter the most dreadful oaths, and think nothing of it. And yet, which is the worse, an offence against man (as robbery or murder would be), or a sin against the Most High GOD?

5. Taking GOD's name in vain ought never to be done, because it is an offence which HE will surely punish. We might spend hours in relating well attested facts like the following:—

A laborer in a stone quarry had, one day, fastened a heavy mass of rock to a rope, for the purpose of its being hoisted up, when the man who was to attend to the windlass, expressed his fears that the rope was not strong enough. The laborer below immediately answered, with a shocking oath, "Then let it crush me to atoms!" The wretched man had hardly thus dared GOD's vengeance, when the stone fell and he was hurried, in a moment, into the presence of the ETERNAL JUDGE.

In the summer of 1796, a violent thunder-storm

passed over the district of Montpelier; about a thousand French soldiers being encamped near the town. At a short distance from the camp, five of the soldiers were helping a husbandman, who had hired them to work in his harvest field. When the storm came on, the party took refuge under a tree, where the soldiers began to blaspheme GOD for interrupting their labor; and one of them, in the madness of his presumption, took up his gun, and pointing it towards the skies, said that he would fire a bullet at HIM, who sent the storm! The husbandman was seized with horror, and fled from the spot; but he had hardly left it when a flash of lightning struck four of the soldiers dead, and wounded the fifth so severely, that his life was despaired of.

Two soldiers, at Chatham, England, once laid a trifling wager, which could swear the most oaths. After one of them had poured out many shocking ones, he hesitated a short time, and said he could think of one more, which should be his last. He was not suffered to utter it, for he was instantly struck speechless, and so remained for about three hours, when he died. By order of his officers, his body was made a public spectacle to the populace, soldiers, and sailors as a salutary warning.

We have purposely avoided relating similar circumstances, much nearer home, being unwilling even in efforts to do good, to give pain to surviving friends, who might recognize the persons referred to.

In cases where the ALMIGHTY does not send temporal judgments on those who blaspheme His holy

name, it is certain that, if they die impenitent and unpardoned, HE has eternal ones in store for them. Has HE not said that HE will not hold them guiltless, who take HIS name in vain? We may be sure that this future punishment will be all the more terrible, because we are not told what it will be.

The profane swearer may now laugh at these threatenings of GOD's word; he may turn a deaf ear to the warnings and exhortations of HIS ministers, and to the prayers and admonitions of HIS people. But "GOD is not a man that HE should lie; nor the son of man that HE should repent. Hath HE said, and shall HE not do it? or hath HE spoken, and shall HE not make it good?" [Num. xxiii: 13].

As Mr. Romaine was one day walking on the street, he heard a man in great wrath, calling upon GOD to damn his soul. The clergyman stopped, and taking out a half-crown, said, "I will give you this, if you will repeat that oath!" The man started back and answered, "What! sir, do you think I will damn my soul for half a crown?" "As you did it just now for nothing," said Mr. Romaine, "I could not suppose you would refuse to do it for a reward!" The reproof went home to the swearer's conscience, and he replied, "GOD bless and reward you, sir, whoever you be. I believe you have saved my soul; I hope I shall never swear again while I live!"

If some friend would write down the oaths which an angry man utters in the course of a single hour, and show him the shocking record, when he had regained his composure, it is doubtful whether he him-

self would not turn from it in disgust. And the profane swearer should remember that an offended God is keeping an account of his violations of the Third Commandment, and that this account will be brought up against him at the final judgment.

Surely, we have presented reasons enough why God's holy name should no longer be profaned. Ponder these reasons well.

St. Chrysostom proposed a plan for breaking off this vile practice, which is worth a trial. "Would'st thou know" he asks, "how thou may'st rid thyself of this wicked custom of swearing? Every time, whenever thou shalt find thyself to have let slip an oath, punish thyself for it by missing the next meal. Such a course as this, though troublesome to the flesh, will be profitable to the spirit, and cause a quick amendment."

Let us all beseech our FATHER in Heaven, to "make us have a perpetual fear, and love of His holy name." And, whenever we read or hear the Third Commandment, let us devoutly say, "LORD have mercy upon us and incline our hearts to keep this law."

## SERMON XXXII.

### CYRUS CALLED BY HIS NAME.

[THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.]

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I, the LORD, *which call thee by thy name*, am the God of Israel.—  
ISAIAH xlv. *part of the 3d verse.*

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THERE are many points connected with Old Testament history, seldom touched upon in the pulpit, which are really of much significance and importance.

I am sure that I shall be leading some of you over new ground in what is to follow.

The wonderful overruling providence of God was never more plainly marked than in the career of Cyrus, the Persian conqueror of Babylon, to whom reference is made in the text. That he was to be made the object of the special guidance of the ALMIGHTY is evident from various passages in the prophecy of Isaiah, which I need not stop to quote. [xli: 25, etc.; xlv: 13, etc.]

A brief sketch of his eventful life will be necessary, to the full understanding of the matters of interest which will be brought before us.



Cyrus was the son of Cambyses, the Persian. He was educated at his father's court, and when twelve years old, he was transferred to the care of his grandfather, and, at an early age, he learned to wage successful war. It will be needless to dwell upon the particulars of his life, and they are only referred to at all, as they have a bearing upon the records of the Bible.

Cyrus succeeded Cambyses in the Kingdom of Persia, and Darius, the Mede, in the Kingdom of the Medes, and the Empire of Babylon. His reign lasted thirty years, and was marked by various memorable events. He permitted the Jews to return to their own land, after the weary years of captivity, and he always cherished a high regard for the Prophet Daniel, and kept him in honorable positions about the court. More than a hundred years before his birth, Isaiah, by the direction of the MOST HIGH, foretold his coming, and called him by his name.

Josephus says, [Antiq. ii: 2], that the Jews in Babylon showed this remarkable passage to the mighty conqueror, and that Cyrus in the edict which he granted for their return, confessed that he received the empire from the GOD of Israel, and that the same ALMIGHTY ONE had described him by name, in the writings of the prophets, and predicted that he should build a temple to him at Jerusalem. That Babylon should be captured by Cyrus is distinctly foretold by the prophets Isaiah [xiii, xix, xxi, xlv, xlvi, xlvii], Jeremiah [xxv, xii, i, li], and Daniel [vii, viii].

No great conqueror ever left behind him a fairer fame than Cyrus. It was his privilege to be the first

Gentile friend to the chosen people of GOD, in the hour of their sorest need, and to restore them to their own land. For the performance of these duties, he is called by the prophet, "The righteous man." [Is. xli: 2; xlv: 13]. His reign was hailed by Isaiah not only as the liberator and benefactor of Israel, but as one who was to inaugurate the blessed Kingdom of Righteousness and Truth. "In contact, also, with Cyrus, the Israelite found, for the first time in the heathen world, not a temptation to idolatry, but a protection of that belief in the unity of GOD, which now as never before began to take hold of the national mind. Of all the Gentile forms of faith, the religion of the Persians was the most simple and the most spiritual. Their abhorrence of idols was pushed almost to fanaticism. And so the advent of Cyrus was hailed by the Prophet as the doom of the gigantic idols of Babylon which should totter and fall before his approach; the bitter scorn with which the old Polytheism was assailed by the Israelite captives was strengthened by the corresponding scoffs which it awakened in the Persian conquerors." [Stanley's "Jewish Church," vol. ii: p. 640].

I referred, just now, to the remarkable fact that Cyrus was called by his name, a hundred years before his birth.

It is interesting to notice that, in the prophecies of Isaiah, there is a gradual preparation for this distinct mention of one whom the ALMIGHTY was to employ as an instrument for good to His people. In the thirteenth chapter, which is headed, "The burden of

Babylon," he and his warriors are presented as the agents by whom the LORD's judgments are to be brought to bear upon the guilty city; but the name of no individual is given.

Passing on to the forty-first chapter, we find the conquering prince described as "the righteous man out of the East," [2d v.]; and in the closing portion of the prophecy [xliv, xlv, xlvi.], the ALMIGHTY not only calls Cyrus by name, but speaks of him as HIS "Shepherd" [xliv: 28]; HIS "Anointed" [xlv: 1], and "the man that executeth HIS counsel" [xlvi: 11]; titles which have been seldom bestowed upon mortals.

When the Persian conqueror, who was a heathen, is described, by the prophet, as a "righteous man," it was merely meant that he should be one who would act from a high sense of right and justice; and all the accounts which have come down to us concerning Cyrus, agree in their representations that such was the character which he really sustained.

He was "the man that executed the counsel" of the MOST HIGH, even while he and his armed hosts fancied they were only carrying out their own purposes and plans.

"The warfare of Jerusalem" was, at last, to be "accomplished," [Is. xl: 2], and "the holy land," so long "waste and desolate," again to be inhabited. The mighty monarchies, the strongholds and defences of paganism, were to be overthrown; and, twenty years after the Jewish exile had begun, Cyrus, the Persian, on whom the eyes of the expectant nations were fixed, appeared on the stirring theatre of human events, as

an anointed hero, [Is. xlv: 1], called of God, to perform great acts.

Curiosity might very naturally prompt one to ask, what impression these wonderful predictions made on the mind of Cyrus himself. There is no doubt that the Jews showed him the places in the roll of prophecy where he was mentioned, and the intimate relations between himself and the Prophet Daniel would enable him to make a careful examination of so remarkable a matter. Indeed, the very words in which his famous edict was expressed, show that he considered himself as an agent of the ALMIGHTY; "JEHOVAH, the GOD of Heaven, hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and HE hath charged me to build HIM an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judea." [2d Chron. xxxvi: 23]. The full extent of his liberality is hardly to be gathered from this decree. It is found, by a copy of it, discovered afterwards, that it was his desire that the temple built under his auspices should be twice as large and magnificent as that which had been built by Solomon. [Ezra. vi: 3].

The minute predictions which had been made, so long before his birth, were designed to afford to Cyrus himself the most undoubted evidence that he had been guided and governed by the ALMIGHTY BEING whom the Hebrews worshipped; and that thus he should feel constrained to do all in his power to further the interests of God's chosen people.

For seven years, after the close of his successful war, Cyrus ruled his vast empire in peace and prosperity, directing his attention to the establishment of

a stable government. He was buried at Pasargadæ, where the remains of his tomb may be seen to this day. In the time of Strabo, it bore this inscription: "*O, man, I am Cyrus, who founded the Persian Empire; envy me not the little earth which covers my remains.*"

Xenophon has represented him as one of the wisest and best monarchs who ever reigned; and Cicero remarks concerning him, that during the whole time of his government, he was never heard to speak one rough or angry word.

One of the titles applied to him by the Prophet, so long before his birth was "the LORD'S *Shepherd*," and it is worth noting that Cyrus himself observed to his courtiers that a good prince should consider himself as the Shepherd of his people, extending the most constant watchfulness over them.

"We ought not to be surprised, that Cyrus was so accomplished in every virtue, because we know that it was GOD HIMSELF, who had formed him to be the instrument and agent of His gracious designs towards His peculiar people." [Rollin's Ancient History, i. p. 178].

Thus, I have brought together, in a brief space, and from a variety of sources, the leading facts in the life of this remarkable man.

It would be easy to go on now, and remind you of various lessons which this history suggests. I shall only speak of one, viz., the bearing which it has on the doctrine of *the special providence of God*.

You will observe, that it was not only the interests of His chosen people, or the success of the Persian

arms, which was to further those interests, which occupied the attention of the ALMIGHTY; but the care which HE exercised over the affairs of the people extended to *the minutest details, even to the singling out of one man by himself, and calling him by his name.*

It is a common mistake (and a most unfortunate one, so far as our comfort and happiness are concerned), that we persist in thinking of GOD only as working on a *large and general* plan. None of us doubt that HE was present in the temple at Jerusalem, as well as amidst the thunders of Sinai; but it is a different matter when we are told to remember that HE watches over each one of us, just as devotedly, as if no other mortal dwelt on the face of the earth; aye, that HE *calls us all by our names.* It is true, we pray in Church, for the Bishops and other clergy; for the rulers of the land; for the sick people in our own neighborhood; and for those exposed to peculiar dangers and trials; but, in spite of all this, we do not bring home to ourselves the truth of HIS omniscience. "The most winning property of our SAVIOUR'S mercy is its dependence on time and place, person and circumstance; in other words, its tender discrimination. It regards and consults for each individual as he comes before it." [Newman's Sermons, i., 518].

I need hardly remind you of the personal concern which the SAVIOUR manifested for Lazarus, and his sisters; for St. Peter, before, and even after, his denial; for St. Thomas; for St. John; and for the blessed Virgin.

What a consolation to those who are neglected and undervalued by the world; who are borne down by

sorrows and misfortunes, to remember that their HEAVENLY FATHER is both kind and discriminating in HIS care for them; that they are not *lost* to HIS view in the busy crowd; but that HE *sees* each one, and *calls each one by his name*.

Such a view of GOD's special providence is well calculated to cheer up our fainting hearts; to make us more collected, more serene, more cheerful, more patient, more enduring. GOD did not more surely say of Cyrus, than HE now says of each of us, who are trying to be HIS obedient children, "I have called thee by thy name."

At the end of our days, when health and strength shall fail, even then will HE call us by our names; the names of ransomed sinners, written down, through HIS mercy, in the LAMB'S book of Life. [Rev. xxi: 27]. And what an honor to have them there! No splendid catalogue of princes, or poets, or statesmen, or warriors, or nobles, will at all compare with the names of those whom the LORD JESUS shall claim as the purchase of HIS blood.

HE alone, who *makes* the record, can *have access* to it; and HE alone, can blot them out.

As so much importance is attached to a name, and as GOD knows each one of us by his name, how anxiously should we strive to preserve our names in untarnished honor and purity.

"I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name," is the peculiar and emphatic way in which the ALMIGHTY spake to Cyrus, and in which HE speaks also to you and to me.

People seldom regard it as much of an honor, when a *general* invitation is given to them, to visit a friend, or an acquaintance, and to partake of his hospitality. If he think enough of them to make the invitation *specific*, the matter assumes a different shape. Now, each one of you is invited by the LORD JESUS, this day, *specially invited*, to come to His Table, and to share in this Heavenly Feast. May none be so unthankful as to refuse to come!



## SERMON XXXIII.

### HONESTY.

[FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.]

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In all things willing to live honestly.—HEBREWS xiii. 18.

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AN old huxter-woman who had heard a plain sermon on the Eighth Commandment, went home and burned her bushel, in which, for years before, she had been dealing out false measure to her customers. Happy would it be, if all of us profited as much by preaching as she did.

Honesty is an old-fashioned virtue. It does not sound as loud and imposing as some other things, but it is, nevertheless, quite too important to be forgotten.

When costly presents were sent to Epaminondas, the great Theban general, he used to remark, "If the thing you desire be good, I will do it without any bribe, even because it is good; if it be not honest, I will not do it for all the goods in the world."

In the text, and in parallel passages, the uniform and consistent conduct of Christians is referred to; and this, as not necessarily connected with business

transactions of any sort. [See Bloomfield's Test, in loco.] Such is St. Paul's idea, when writing to the Romans. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." [xii: 17]. And again, to the Corinthians, "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the LORD, but also in the sight of men." [2d, viii: 21]. The Apostle would have us so cautious in all we do and say, so conscientious and upright, that even the fault-finding, censorious world, may be forced to acknowledge and admire the triumphs of the Gospel, as witnessed in the lives of its followers.

Having thus stated the extended sense, in which such Scriptural terms are used, I shall not hesitate to employ the text as a guide to some reflections upon that homely, but most important duty, taught us in the Catechism, "*to be true and just in all our dealings.*"

There is a very *slight* exaggeration, if *any*, in the poet's declaration, that—

"An *honest* man's the noblest work of God."—POPE.

I cannot but think that the old Proverb, "Honesty is the best *policy*," sets forth quite too low a motive for the regulation of Christian conduct. *Expediency*, or *policy*, is a contemptible ground of actions, right or wrong. We are bound to be honest, without reference to considerations of this sort.

It is oftentimes *inconvenient* to be honest. We may even hazard the loss of present advantage by being so. But our relations to our fellowmen, as members of the same great social compact, aside from our relations to GOD, enforce, most imperatively, the obliga-

tion to be honest. "Right implies duty in its idea. To perceive an action to be right, is to see a reason for doing it, in the action itself, abstracted from all other considerations whatever; and this perception, this acknowledged rectitude in the action, is the very essence of obligation; that which commands the approbation, and binds the conscience of every rational human being." [Dr. Adam's Sermons, late of Oxford.]

Enough has been said in the settlement of *first principles*. Let us endeavor to put these principles into *practice*. "In all things willing to live honestly."

1. This suggestion of the Apostle's, should influence us in our daily intercourse with men. We live in a tricky, truckling world. Selfishness is the order of the day. Deception, and injustice, and wrong-dealing, are too often practised, and, that too, by those who occupy a fair position in the eyes of men. How many business transactions, which are esteemed honorable by the world, are unjust and dishonest in God's sight!

Is there no harm in extorting from the embarrassed and the unfortunate, rates of interest which the law forbids? Can it be considered quite right to set an exorbitant value upon houses and lands, and to require rents for them, which they are in no wise worth? Are the poor justified in occupying such property as is too expensive for them to pay for; pledging their word to meet certain demands, when there is no reasonable prospect of their being able to do so? Is it honorable to take advantage of the open-heartedness of a friend, and to *borrow* money of him, which we

never expect to repay? Is it acting a Christian part, to ask people to *lend* us something, when we mean that they shall *give* it to us; but we are too proud to speak of it in that way? Is it honest for those whose house-rent, and store-bills are unpaid, to be laying out as much, and even more in market than their rich neighbors do; as if respectability depended more on keeping up an abundant table, than in the practice of necessary economy, and in defrauding no one of his dues? Is it practicing our SAVIOUR's golden rule, to be running up long accounts with the merchant, and the grocer, and the mechanic, which we see no way of settling within a reasonable time, and which it will put them to serious inconvenience not to have promptly attended to? Alas! my friends, it is too often forgotten, that *Honesty* is a part of *Religion*. Men are slow to learn the every-day duties of life. They seem to doubt that fact, which GOD's word records, "In the revenues of the wicked there is trouble." [Prov. xv: 16].

2. Again, the admonition of the text should be heard in the *fashionable world*.

Old Bishop Sanderson used to say, that "the two curses," of his time, were "beggary and shabby gentility." By the latter expression, he meant those airs and apings of fashionable life, which can only be kept up, by drawing upon means which should be otherwise and better employed. The education of children is sometimes neglected, in order that they may rival the butterflies in their showy dress. Family comforts are diminished, and domestic happiness impaired, that

entertainments may be given, and a favorable impression made in the world.

The rights of others are trespassed upon; the property of others endangered, in order that these whims may be gratified, and these notions of self-respect may be observed.

Dress, and parties, and operas, and summers at watering-places, and by the sea-side, and winters in the South, and foreign travel, are all well enough, when health demands, and our means allow of such recreations; but to go in debt for such indulgences, and to make others suffer for it, is not only improper, but sinful.

No person who knowingly and recklessly lives beyond his means, can expect to be esteemed. If we are not able to purchase every thing that we wish, we have no other honest course left us, but to limit our desires. What right have any to wear fine clothes, or costly ornaments, when the tailor, or the mantua-maker, or the jeweler, must suffer by this extravagance? How entirely out of place does costly furniture appear, in the houses of those who are saddled with debt! We are always more thought of, for being simple in our tastes and habits. No one but a fool thinks of judging of a man's worth, by the quality or cut of his coat.

3. Again, the truth which I am endeavoring to enforce, should be attended to in the *political* world.

With party politics, the minister of CHRIST should have nothing at all to do. The Kingdom in which God has appointed him to serve, is not of this world.

He does his duty, so far as political matters are concerned, when he prays for those in authority, and, by precept and example, teaches others to obey the laws of the land. He looks upon the great, bustling world of politics as a whole, uninfluenced by its sectional divisions, and interests, and aspirations. The sphere in which the politician moves is one which requires in him not only intellectual cultivation, but high moral principle. Without a proper reverence for truth and virtue, he is constantly liable to be led astray by the snares of corruption, and the prospect of worldly gain. Firm and well-established, indeed, must be the principles of the man, who, in wielding political power, never yields to temptation; never shrinks back from the discharge of duty; but who always goes forward in the path of justice, regardless of consequences.

It is certainly much easier to describe what politicians *ought* to be, than to find those who come up to the standard which is set for them. Perhaps, in no calling of life, is it more difficult to fulfil the Apostle's injunction, "In all things willing to live honestly."

It could serve no good purpose, to speak from the pulpit, of the partiality, the unfairness, and bitterness of the *political press*. But when individual Christians are seen to drink in this hateful spirit, and to manifest it in their lives, we have no right to hold our peace.

No matter how good the man who is proposed as a candidate for office, those of the opposite party must depreciate his abilities, blacken his character, and question his honesty. In the excitement of a canvass, or the heat of an election, even *Christians* so far

forget themselves as to join in such dishonorable proceedings, and those who profess no little saintliness will think it no harm to spend the sacred hours of Sunday in collecting recruits, and in buying votes. Brow-beating, bids, and bribes, are resorted to without hesitation, and this, too, in a country which is so fond of boasting itself as being the most free, the most liberal, and the most enlightened upon earth!

4. Once more, the direction, to "live honestly," as contained in the text, may be considered as addressed to the *Religious world*. This expression is very broad and comprehensive; embracing, as it does, all those forms and phases into which the minds of men have been moulded to satisfy the conscientious scruples, or to suit the caprice and convenience of men.

As was foretold by the aged Simeon, when the HOLY CHILD JESUS was presented in the Temple; the *Son of God*, and, through HIM, the *Church* of HIS appointment, has been "for a sign to be spoken against" [St. Luke ii: 34], in all times, and in all places. Here, the bitterness, and prejudice, and pride of man, have found full vent. In the very face of fairness, and honesty, and charity, how common it is to charge her with teaching doctrines, and encouraging practices, to which she is an utter stranger. Language is perverted, trifles magnified, and misrepresentations made, for which there is not the smallest ground in truth.

This course may satisfy petty jealousy, and feed sectarian hate, but it is certainly no part of that Christian love, of which St. Paul so beautifully remarks, it "thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but re-

joiceth in the truth; beareth all things; hopeth all things." [1st Cor. xiii: 5-7].

The members of the "one body" of CHRIST, can well afford to be humble, patient, and magnanimous, since our cause is the cause of truth and of GOD. As St. John, in his simple, plain-spoken way has expressed it, "we *know* that we are of the truth." Ours is a "conviction based upon the word of GOD, strengthened by the history of the Church, confirmed by the experience of ages, and responded to by the very constitution of man." [Bp. Smith's Charge to the Clergy of Ky., in 1843, p. 4.]

While, therefore, others have no right to slander us, we ought cheerfully to forgive them. No unfair means should be used to help even the cause of CHRIST. The motto so often acted upon, that "The *end* sanctifies the *means*," can find no countenance from the Bible.

St. Paul hurled it back, as a base slander, when he was reported to have said, in accordance with the same unworthy principle, "Let us do evil, that good may come." [Rom. iii: 8].

No dishonest action ought *ever* to be done, no matter how strong the temptation to commit it. Any imaginable good which we may think will result from it; any advantage to ourselves, or to our cause; or any glory which we may fancy may result to GOD, will not sanction or justify the deed. Strict, uncompromising integrity and honesty is to be the maxim of our lives; and in *such* a life only, can we hope for success, or for the blessing of GOD.

To cultivate honesty, my friends, in all we do and



say, is a positive Christian duty, and GOD *expects* it of us. In *small* things, and in great, let us be careful of our integrity.

Some are honest, because they have no temptation to be otherwise; some, because they are closely and carefully watched; some, because a true sense of honor requires it. I would have *you* influenced by a higher and holier principle, *because* GOD *commands* it. *Honesty* never shines forth more beautifully than in cases where it is *policy* to be otherwise. In one of the German wars, a captain of cavalry was ordered out on a foraging party; and, putting himself at the head of his troop, he marched to the quiet valley where the needed supplies were to be obtained. Approaching a little cottage, half hid by trees, the officer knocked at the door, which was promptly opened by a good old man, with a beard silvered by age, to whom he said, in a respectful tone, "Father, show me a field where I can set my soldiers a foraging." "Presently," answered the old Moravian; and going in advance, as a guide, he soon led them out of the valley, and, after a quarter of an hour's march, they reached a fine field of barley. "There is the very thing we want!" exclaimed the captain. "Have patience, for a few moments," returned the guide, "you shall speedily be satisfied," and trudging on a mile or so further, they came to another field. As the soldiers dismounted, and began to cut the grain, the captain said, "Father, you have given us and yourself unnecessary trouble; the first field was much better than this." "Very true," replied the old man, "but that was not mine!"

He who does not feel his heart warmed by such an example of exalted virtue, may fairly blush for his blunted sensibilities.

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." [St. Matt. vii: 12]. Let "no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter." [1st Thess. iv: 6]. Let ours be the old-fashioned honesty which keeps its engagements for rent, and pays school debts, and settles store-bills, making no compromise between right and wrong; and which is willing to wear coarser clothes, and eat plainer food, rather than rob another of his rights.

## SERMON XXXIV.

### INTERCESSORY PRAYER.

[FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.]

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O, that Ishmael might live before THEE!—GENESIS xvii: 18.

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PHILO, the Jew, discoursing concerning Aaron's ephod, which he put on when he went into the holy-place to pray, observes, that it was "a representation of the whole world, having in it all colors, to represent the condition of all states of people whatsoever." And here, my friends, is a lesson for all who claim to be GOD's children. There is a common brotherhood which binds the whole world together, and we commit a grievous wrong, when, through selfishness, or sloth, or the indulgence of malice, we wipe men's names and conditions from the tablets of our memories, and neglect them in our prayers.

"Think ye the spires that glow so bright

In front of yonder setting sun,

Stand by their own unshaken might?

No! where th' upholding grace is won

We dare not ask, nor Heaven would tell

But sure from many a hidden dell,

From many a rural nook unthought of there,

Rises for that proud world the saint's prevailing prayer."

KEBLE.

Intercessory prayer! It is wonderful to think of it. To remember that our prayers for others may affect, most seriously and decidedly, their temporal and eternal good, and that without these prayers, such good would never be bestowed, is a way of looking at the subject which is fairly startling. And yet, no one who believes the Bible can doubt it, for a moment.

“A good man’s prayers  
Will from the deepest dungeon climb to heaven’s height,  
And bring a blessing down.”—JOANNA BAILLIE.

Such was the earnest supplication of faithful Abraham, in the text. The life of the Patriarch had reached nearly a hundred years, when the ALMIGHTY announced to him the certainty of offspring from his marriage with Sarah, and that with Ishmael HE would establish an everlasting covenant. Abraham’s believing heart swells with thankfulness and joy, and he fell down and worshipped. In the promise of Isaac, he saw, by faith, the promise of the REDEEMER. Then it was that the Patriarch rejoiced to see our SAVIOUR’S day; “He saw it, and was glad.” [St. John viii: 56]. But had Abraham forgotten his relation to the son of Hagar? No. At the very time when the ALMIGHTY was speaking to him of Isaac, for whom his covenant blessings were designed, he sends up a parental prayer for one whose earthly lot was to be less favored; “O, that Ishmael might live before THEE!” That prayer was heard. The gracious answer came, “As for Ishmael, I have heard thee; behold I *have* blessed him, and will multiply him exceedingly.”

Here, you observe, is an example of intercessory prayer, and of the *effects* of it.

St. Paul mentions intercessory prayer, over and over, as a plain and imperative Christian duty. "Praying always," he writes to the Ephesians [vi: 18], "with all prayer and supplication in the SPIRIT, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

Hear this great Apostle's account of his own practice, in this thing of intercessory prayer. "I cease not to give thanks for you," he says to the Christians of Ephesus, "making mention of you in my prayers." [i: 16]. To the Philippians, "I thank my GOD upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy; for your fellowship in the Gospel." [i: 3-5]. And so, also, in other places, which need not be mentioned. [Coloss. i: 3; 1st Thess. i: 2, etc.] Prayer, after all, my friends, is the *great* weapon by which we are to prevail, in securing good for ourselves and for others, and in warding off the Evil One.

It should be remarked, in this connection, that GOD does not promise to answer the petition which the impenitent and disobedient may choose to offer for their fellow men. This class of persons are encouraged to pray for themselves, but they are not called upon to act as intercessors for others. "We know that GOD heareth not *sinner*s (who attempt this service for their friends, in sickness or distress, when their first and great concern should be to confess their own sins, and supplicate HIS favor); but if any man be a worshipper

of GOD, and doeth HIS will, him HE heareth." [St. John ix: 31].

Intercessory prayer, then, has laws to regulate it, which do not apply to the prayers of the returning penitent.

St. John tells us, that "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of HIM, *because we keep HIS commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in HIS sight,*" [1st Epis. iii: 22]; and, it is only "The fervent prayer of a *righteous* man, which availeth much," [St. James v: 16], in securing blessings for others.

The intercession of holy Job, for his ungrateful friends, and the sacrifices offered for his children, called down mercies from above.

Moses, that pattern of meekness and forbearance, and the type of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the GREAT INTERCESSOR, stood between an offended GOD and HIS disobedient people, and by his fervent prayers, turned away the fierceness of HIS anger.

Faithful Abraham was the means of rescuing Lot, when Sodom was destroyed. He also interceded for Abimilech and his family, and GOD heard his prayer. Samuel prayed for Israel, and the LORD fought for them, and overthrew the Philistines.

Although Elias was "a man subject to like passions as we are," he "prayed earnestly that it might not rain," [St. James v: 17]; and "the heaven was shut up three years and six months." [St. Luke iv: 25]. "And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit." [St. James v: 18].

The Prophet Ezekiel tells us that the intercession

of Saints like Noah, Daniel and Job, might be effectual in saving even *whole nations* from destruction.

I shall conclude this Scriptural view of the subject with our SAVIOUR'S blessed promise. "If ye abide in ME, and MY words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." [St. John xv: 7]. If such be the *authority* and *encouragement* for intercessory prayer, it follows that Christians should not only never neglect it, but glory in the exercise of so high a privilege.

No one can ask favors for *others*, from the GOD of all grace and goodness, without securing some benefit for *himself*.

Envy, hatred, and all ungracious and sinful passions must be driven from the breast of him who is pouring forth kind wishes for his neighbors, and beseeching the good LORD to bless them. "When we pray for the objects of our dearest regard, it purifies passion, and exalts love into religion; when we pray for those with whom we have worldly intercourse, it smooths down the swellings of envy, and bids the tumults of anger and ambition subside; when we pray for our country, it sanctifies patriotism; when we pray for those in authority, it adds a divine motive to human obedience; when we pray for our enemies, it softens the savageness of war. There is no such softener of animosity, no such soother of resentment, no such allayer of hatred, as sincere cordial prayer." [Hannah More's Works, vol. vii., p. 369].

The subject which we have been considering should teach us several important lessons.

1. And, first, let Christian parents learn from it *the duty and the privilege of praying for their children.*

No sooner had Abraham uttered the fervent supplication, "O, that Ishmael might live before THEE!" than the gracious answer came, that GOD *had* heard the petition, and that the blessing which he sought for his son, should be granted. The first wish of parents for their children should always be, that they "may live before GOD." Having been brought into covenant with HIM in their early infancy, by holy Baptism, every appointed means should be used to help them to grow in grace, and to live the rest of their lives according to that beginning. Need I say, my friends, that daily, earnest prayers in their behalf should never be neglected? And, did Abraham content himself with one petition that it might be well with his dear son? Hear the reason given by the ALMIGHTY, for hearkening to his request. "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment." [Gen. xviii: 19]. Let it be *your* endeavor, my friends, to do likewise.

2. Again, *Christians should obey the directions of St. James, to "Pray one for another."* [v: 16].

There is no telling how much benefit we may all receive through the prayers of good people who think enough of us to remember us at a throne of grace; and, on the other hand, we cannot calculate the harm that comes upon our friends, because we have neglected to do this much for them. We may be poor enough in this world's wealth, but we have the inex-



haustible bank of GOD's mercies which we can freely draw upon, through the agency of our intercessions.

In one of his soul-stirring sermons, in which Whitefield was exhorting his hearers to give up their efforts for the spiritual good of their relatives and friends *only with their lives*; he remarked that he once had a brother, for whose eternal welfare he had used every possible means. He had warned him, and prayed for him; and, apparently, to no purpose, until a few weeks ago, when his brother, to his astonishment and joy, came to his house, and, with many tears, declared that his business was to make known to him the great change which had been wrought in his views and feelings, and to thank him for all his prayers in his behalf. "And, this very morning," added the preacher, "I have received a letter, informing me that on my brother's return to his home in Gloucestershire, he dropped dead as he was getting out of the stage-coach. Therefore, let us pray always for ourselves, and for those who are dear to us, and never faint!"

Moreover, this duty of intercession should be extended to our very enemies. We have our SAVIOUR's *precept*, and our SAVIOUR's *example*, to guide us in this. "Pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you," [St. Matt. v: 44], was HIS own loving commandment; and HIS touching supplication, in the midst of HIS cross and passion, "FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" [St. Luke xxiii: 34]; was HIS own exemplification of the doctrine which HE taught. The first martyr, St. Stephen,

too, even after he had ejaculated, "LORD JESUS, receive my spirit!" kneeled down, and cried with his latest breath, "LORD, lay not this sin to their charge." [Acts vii: 60]. The children of GOD, in all ages, have set the same beautiful example. Burkitt observes in his journal, in his characteristic way, that some persons would never have had a share in his prayers but for the injuries they had done him. This may be a *hard* rule to follow, but we shall all find it a *good* one.

3. Again, Christians should not forget *to pray for their rulers, and their country.*

St. Paul's words are explicit, when he directs the Bishop of Ephesus, (who, of course, had the ordering of such things in his diocese), that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all that are in authority." [1st Tim. ii: 1-2].

Ample provision is made in the Prayer-Book for carrying out this rule, and we shall be consulting our own interests when we beseech the HIGH and MIGHTY RULER of the universe to replenish those in authority with the grace of HIS HOLY SPIRIT, "that they may always incline to HIS will, and walk in HIS way."

4. Christians should also *ask GOD's blessing on the labors of their ministers, and on the Church at large.*

St. Paul knew, full well, that he might plant, and his fellow-laborer, Apollos, might water; but that GOD alone could give the increase. [1st Cor. iii: 6]. Hence, his earnest request of his Christian friends, "Brethren, *pray for us!*" [1st Thess. v: 25]. And remember, my hearers, that every minister of the

LORD JESUS, who, amid much care, and imperfection, and discouragement, is trying to do his MASTER'S work, would do it much more effectually, if all, for whose benefit he labors, would ask GOD to bless him.

If the office of CHRIST'S ambassador be one of peculiar difficulty; if the man who holds it has need that the flame of devotion should burn brightly in his *own* heart, to enable him properly to lead the devotions of the people; if he ought to possess a ripe judgment, rich stores of knowledge, and a holy boldness, in teaching simple Gospel truth; if he have need of great patience, gentleness, tenderness, and fidelity, in order to discharge his duties at the bedside of the sick and the dying; if the prosperity of the Church at large depends, in a great degree, on the zeal and fidelity of the clergy; can you doubt, my friends, what a constant place we ought to have in your most earnest prayers? O, if we could but feel that the poor widow, that the young Christian, that the sick and the bed-ridden, that the humblest child of GOD, remembers us, night and morning, when they draw nigh the gate of mercy, how would our fainting hearts revive; and how should we be animated to be very courageous, and do valiantly for our common LORD!

One suggestion more, and I have done. When we pray for *ourselves*, we follow up our petitions with our best *endeavors*, that the thing may be brought to pass. And so it amounts to nothing, to beseech the good LORD to bring those whom we love to a knowledge of the truth, unless we do all in our power to accom-

plish this end. "You may, indeed, pray for those for whom you can do nothing else; but there are those for whom you ought to pray, for whom you may do much more. Pray for your children; and try to train them in the right way. Pray for your friends; and never miss a chance of doing them a good turn, for this life, or the next. Pray for the heathen; and help the agencies for their conversion. Pray for the sorrowful, and never lose the opportunity of comforting a sad heart." [Graver Thoughts of Country Parson, 2d series, p. 179].

By thus following up our *prayers* with the *actions* which should correspond with them, our intercessions will never be in vain.

## SERMON XXXV.

### THE CHURCH ENRICHED BY HER ASCENDED LORD.

[SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY.]

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THOU art gone up on high, THOU hast led captivity captive, and received gifts for men; yea, even for THINE enemies, that the LORD God might dwell among them.—PSALM lxxviii. 18.

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THIS day has been known, for long ages, as “Expectation Sunday,” because our blessed SAVIOUR having ascended into Heaven, as on Thursday last, the little company of HIS faithful people were as yet waiting for the fulfilment of HIS promise that the COMFORTER should be sent. The collect carries us back, and makes us sympathize with the sorrowing ones to whom JESUS said, “I will not leave you *orphans*,” and the Epistle and Gospel are most happily chosen.

The text forms a part of the noble psalm which David wrote, when the Ark of the LORD was brought up to the most holy place, on Mount Zion, attended by a solemn procession of singers, and those who played on instruments of music, and by the chief dignitaries of the several tribes.

The same psalm is used on Whit-Sunday, because the HOLY SPIRIT was the greatest of all the precious gifts which CHRIST gave to man, when HE returned to the bosom of the FATHER.

St. Paul\* applies the words of the text to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the true ark on which the DIVINE glory rested, who, having burst the bars of death, "led captivity captive," by triumphing over all HIS vanquished foes; and, having received from the FATHER manifold heavenly gifts, as the reward of HIS toils and sufferings, gave them in unstinted measure to HIS Church.

The text embraces three prominent points which had best be considered in their order. First, *it states the fact of CHRIST'S ascension*, "THOU art gone up on high;" secondly, *it speaks of HIS glorious victory over every enemy*, "THOU hast led captivity captive;" and thirdly, *it enumerates some of the benefits secured by this signal triumph, even to those who, by their base ingratitude, have forfeited all claim to HIS goodness*, "THOU hast received gifts for men; yea, even for THINE enemies, that the LORD GOD might dwell among them."

1. First, then, as to *the fact of CHRIST'S ascension*. The text is a prophecy, and the Evangelists record its fulfilment.

While in the act of blessing HIS disciples, as they were gathered about HIM, on Mount Olivet, "HE was taken up, and a cloud received HIM out of their sight." [St. Luke xxiv: 50; Acts i: 1].

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\* Ephesians iv: 8.

The disciples must have trembled at the significance of this act of blessing, and there might well be a rush of all tender emotions, as their dear LORD ceased to speak, because, for a time at least, they were losing HIM. Heaven seemed to be drawing back its own to itself again.

The spot from whence the ascension took place was near Bethany, not far from the place where the SAVIOUR'S greatest triumph had been witnessed, and HIS most dreadful agonies endured. This final act of HIS earthly history, was the completion of HIS work, and the FATHER'S testimony of HIS acceptance of it.

Our LORD'S ascension was real and glorious, exalting HIM far above all principalities and powers. That same JESUS who, out of compassion for our apostate race, "humbled HIMSELF even to the death of the Cross," enduring its curse and its terrible reproach, entered the gates of Heaven, the first of the descendants of Adam, and has left them ajar, so that "all believers" may go in after HIM.

The blessed promises of pardon and acceptance, which sustained the saints of old, who clung to them by faith, are made doubly sure to us, now that CHRIST has died; "yea, rather, is risen again," and ever maketh intercession for us, at the right hand of GOD. [Romans viii: 34].

2. Again, the text makes mention of the MESSIAH'S victory over every foe: "*THOU hast led captivity captive.*"

Here, HE is represented as a conquering Prince, returning to HIS royal capital, laden with abundant spoils. HIS foot has been placed on the necks of HIS

enemies, in token of their complete subjection, and now stripped of their vaunted power, and covered with shame, they are seen chained to the wheels of His chariot, and following with reluctant step, His triumphal march. The Devil and his angels, death the destroyer of our race, and all who can be counted as fallen and depraved, beyond the reach of mercy, make up that wretched crowd.

“THOU hast led captivity captive.” It is the MESSIAH’S glorious victory over HIS enemies and ours. The conflict was waged during long ages, before HE came in the flesh to work out eternal redemption for us; but the fiercest and bloodiest fight took place about HIS cross; and, although the warfare, for us, will not be ended until the SAVIOUR’S second coming, in glorious majesty, at the last day, when HE shall bind Satan, and cast him down to the bottomless pit; yet we have this comfort, that the well-ordered battalions of the Prince of Darkness have been routed by our great CAPTAIN, and that it is only with his scattered and despairing troops that we are expected to contend.

“Hosanna to the PRINCE of light,  
Who clothed HIMSELF in clay;  
Entered the iron gates of death,  
And tore the bars away.

Death is no more the king of dread,  
Since our Immanuel rose;  
He took the tyrant’s sting away,  
And conquered all our foes.”—DR. WATTS.



3. The inspired Psalmist also alludes to the blessings secured to believers by their ascended LORD: "*THOU hast received gifts for men.*"

Do you ask, what gifts? As no common *trophies* graced HIS triumphal march, so we may be sure that no insignificant gifts would be bestowed by HIM on an occasion such as this. St. Paul tells us that they were the manifold gifts of the HOLY GHOST; "the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues," and the ability to understand and interpret them. [1st Cor. xii: 8-10].

Not only does the SAVIOUR receive the SPIRIT without measure for HIMSELF, as the reward of HIS faithful service, but HE is empowered to bestow the gifts of the SPIRIT upon us.

With this abundant supply of heavenly grace and blessing, the first heralds of the cross went forth to evangelize the world. In later times, the necessity for some of these has ceased, and they have accordingly been withdrawn. When the walls of a building have been carried up, the scaffolding is removed. The gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT are, however, still freely bestowed on those, who are duly called and ordained to the work of the ministry. The whole body of GOD's faithful people are made partakers of them in the several ordinances of the Church; even "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true goodness, and the spirit of holy fear."\*

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\* Confirmation Office.

“What greater gift, what greater love,  
Could God on man bestow?”

Marvellous as were the wonders of the Apostolic age, they were not really greater gifts than Christians may yet enjoy. “THOU hast received gifts for *men*,” says the Psalmist, for fallen and rebellious *men*; not for pure and holy angels. And for what end? The text contains the answer; “*That the LORD GOD might dwell among them.*”

Once, GOD *did* dwell with man, and communed with him as a friend, and it was only sin which led HIM to forsake the earth. *Forsake* is too strong a word; our gracious FATHER only *left it for a season*. HIS purpose was afterwards to return; and the whole plan of redemption was wrought out by our adorable REDEEMER; that an offended GOD might be just, and, at the same time, the justifier of those who seek refuge in CHRIST JESUS. [Romans iii: 26].

The LORD GOD *did* return, when the ETERNAL SON “was made flesh, and *dwelt among us*.” [St. John i: 14].

The gift of the HOLY SPIRIT, purchased by the precious blood of JESUS, is secured to each obedient child of GOD, and he becomes a temple of the HOLY GHOST, “a habitation of GOD through the SPIRIT.” [1st Cor. iii: 16-17; Ephes. ii: 22].

Ah! how holy should be that heart in which the BLESSED SPIRIT of GOD deigns to dwell! When an illustrious guest honors us by sharing with us our poor abode, the least we can do is to cherish his presence, and be ever on the watch, lest our misconduct or neglect should drive him away.

Is any timid soul saying to himself, "Alas! what hope for me?" Ample and abundant hope, my hearer. Observe the emphasis with which it is mentioned in the text, that it is even on His *enemies*, (if disposed to submit to HIM, and become His friends), that HE is ready to bestow His precious gifts.

We might have well supposed that the SAVIOUR'S glorious ascension would be made the occasion for punishing those who had despised His overtures of mercy, and done despite unto the spirit of grace; but HE still continues patient and long suffering. Will you refuse any longer His proffered gift, O, impenitent and rebellious sinner; the gift of *pardon*?

Humble-minded, trusting Christian, let this "Expectation Sunday" be a happy day for you. The SAVIOUR renews to us, once more, the gracious promise that the BLESSED COMFORTER shall come, even the HOLY GHOST, that HE may help us to do God's will, purifying our hearts and making us ready for His second appearing. We all have our cares and sorrows; our infirmities of body; our manifold temptations; our secret sins; our vexations of business; our household troubles; and we all need support and comfort.

Thanks to GOD that our adorable SAVIOUR, once a man of sorrows upon this earth, has ascended into the heavens, to be our prevailing intercessor. If we draw near to HIM with true penitent hearts, and in undoubting faith, the peace of GOD, which passeth all understanding, shall keep our hearts and minds through CHRIST JESUS.

## SERMON XXXVI.

### PARTAKERS OF THE HOLY GHOST.

[WHIT-SUNDAY.]

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Made partakers of the HOLY GHOST.—HEBREWS vi. *part of the 4th verse*

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TO-DAY, we celebrate with every branch of the Apostolic Church, the great event of which this is the anniversary, the descent of the BLESSED SPIRIT.

What a wonderful day was that first Whit-Sunday at Jerusalem! For well nigh fifteen hundred years the Jews had kept it as the Feast of *Pentecost*, or the Feast of the *Fiftieth* Day. It was also called the "Feast of Weeks," because a week of weeks, (seven times seven days), came between the Passover and this Festival; and was reckoned from the day when the barley-sheaf was cut for the wave-offering of the Passover. Need I stop to remind you that this wave-offering signified CHRIST the "first fruits" of the resurrection?

The seven weeks seem to have reference to the *seven-fold spirit*, of which the golden candlestick, with its seven branches, was a striking symbol.

For more than eighteen centuries, countless multitudes of GOD's people, in all lands, have observed this holy time; and well and wisely have they done it, because of the great and precious gift this day bestowed.

The SAVIOUR had left His sorrowing disciples with the promise that the BLESSED COMFORTER should soon be sent, and they were waiting, in anxious suspense, for the fulfilment of it.

Ten days had passed, almost an age, in their orphan, helpless state, when suddenly, "a sound from heaven, as of a rushing, mighty wind," was heard, and on every head of the chosen band who had to go forth as champions of GOD's truth, was seen a forked flame of fire, like unto a burning tongue. [Acts ii: 1-4].

This tongue of fire was the emblem of the presence of the HOLY SPIRIT within the heart. And, lo! what wonderful evidence of that presence of the HOLY ONE was forthwith vouchsafed! The untaught fishermen of Galilee, who before could speak no language but their own, now began to proclaim to the multitudes in Jerusalem, the glorious truths of redemption, in all the dialects of the earth!

In a moment, these timid, shrinking men were endowed with marvellous power, and St. Peter preached with such impassioned eloquence, that three thousand, so lately stubborn Jews and benighted heathens, were admitted to the privileges of Christian baptism.

Would it not have been passing strange, had the Church forgotten, or neglected to commemorate this great feast of Whit-Sunday?

Before we enter upon the consideration of the text,

it is proper to remind you, in few words, that the HOLY GHOST is the third PERSON of the ever adorable TRINITY, "of one substance, majesty, and glory with the FATHER, and the SON, very and eternal GOD."\*

The Scriptures teach, most explicitly, that the BLESSED SPIRIT is a *Person*; a *Divine* Person; and the sacrament of Baptism is administered in HIS name, as well as in the name of the FATHER, and in the name of the SON, because HE is of the same nature and of equal power with them.

The very name of "the COMFORTER," bestowed upon the HOLY SPIRIT by the SAVIOUR, shows of itself, that HE must be a PERSON.

Such a word would be wholly inapplicable to a *thing*; to any mere influence, or attribute, or agency, as triflers have dared to speak of HIM.

"*Personality* of the spirit!" exclaimed a skeptic of this sort; "why, the spirit is wind, breath, air; the very Greek word shows you this, for it simply means *wind*."

"Be it so," said a reverent Christian, "but please tell me the meaning of this passage; 'except a man be born of water and of the *wind*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of GOD. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the *wind* is *wind*. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the *wind*.'"

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\* The *Fifth* Article of Religion.

Do you wonder that no answer was returned?

Had the HOLY SPIRIT been less than GOD, the SAVIOUR could never have said that it was expedient that HE HIMSELF should go back to heaven, that the COMFORTER might be sent. HIS very language implied that HIS people were not merely to have another COMFORTER, but one equal to HIMSELF, and even superior in this respect, that HE would abide continually with the Church, unto the end of the world.

The HOLY GHOST is ready to be to us every thing we need. Our souls, without HIS grace, would be as dead as the withered branch through which the sap had ceased to flow.

We appeal to HIM in our ignorance, and HE becomes to us the spirit of wisdom and revelation. As the spirit of purity, HE is ready to wash away the defilement of our sins. The HOLY GHOST puts into our minds good desires, and helps us to perform the same. As the spirit of love, HE pours into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace, and of all virtues. HE it is who comforts the sorrowing, and whispers words of hope to the friendless and the desolate. HE inspired the minds of Prophets and Apostles to write and to teach. HE set before us the bright examples of holy martyrs and lovely saints. HE has moved the hearts of GOD's people to build churches, and endow homes for orphans, hospitals for the sick, and places of refuge for the poor and the aged. HE sends forth missionaries and stewards of the mysteries of GOD into all lands, giving them tongues of fire, "to preach the reconciling word," and

turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just. The doctrine of the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT upon the soul, is one which lies at the foundation of all Gospel truth. Human nature is so frail, so corrupt, so easily enticed into wrong-doing, that we feel the *necessity*, the *absolute necessity* of a DIVINE agency in bringing us back to truth and virtue, and in helping us to gain the victory over temptation and sin. The Bible points us to this DIVINE HELPER in the person of the HOLY SPIRIT. "The efficacy of both sacraments is lodged in the HOLY GHOST; and, to the glory of our Church be it said, that this doctrine is prominently declared in its Offices, Catechism, Articles, and Homilies. If then, the *Sacraments* have power only as the HOLY GHOST accompanies, precedes, or succeeds their ministration; if the *Ministry* have power only as the HOLY GHOST comes down upon it; if the *Word* have power only as it is sent home to the hearts by the HOLY GHOST, then are we right in declaring, with emphasis, that the Church of the living GOD is maintained in its outward visibility, and in its mystical incorporation with its risen head, by the power of the HOLY GHOST."<sup>\*</sup>

How appropriate, therefore, the observance of the time-honored anniversary when the BLESSED COMFORTER descended first, in visible form, as the Teacher and Guide of GOD's believing people! The Apostle speaks of Christians, in the text, as those who have been "*made partakers of the HOLY GHOST,*" *i. e., partakers of HIS sacred influences.*

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\* Bishop William Bacon Stevens.



As we *partake* of food, when we share it with others, and *partake* of pleasure, when we enjoy it with them, so do we *partake* of the influences of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT, when we are instructed, guided, comforted, and blessed by HIM.

Wonderful and consoling assurance, indeed, that weak and erring as we know ourselves to be, yet, if children of GOD, by adoption and grace, and if anxious to serve and please HIM, in newness of life, we are "*made partakers of the HOLY GHOST.*"

When we read, in the portions of Holy Scripture appointed for Whit Sunday, of the great things which the BLESSED SPIRIT accomplished for Christians on this day, so many ages ago, we may well ask ourselves, what is our individual share in this precious gift? and what the office and work of this DIVINE AGENT in us?

That GOD the HOLY GHOST does *something* for us, and something most *important*, is evident from the services in the Prayer-Book, which contain the plainest and purest teachings of the Gospel. How often, in our prayers, do we earnestly plead for "the *inspiration* of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT;" for HIS "direction and rule;" for HIS "daily renewal;" for HIS constant "increase." "Give THY HOLY SPIRIT to this infant," or to "this person," is the prayer of the minister who performs the baptismal office.

"Defend, O LORD, this THY child, with THY heavenly grace," is the solemn form of confirmation, "that he may continue THINE forever; and daily increase in THY HOLY SPIRIT more and more, until he come unto THY everlasting Kingdom."

"Receive ye the HOLY GHOST," is the high commission conferred on each ambassador for CHRIST, when duly authorized to minister in sacred things.

The *gift*, the *presence*, the *help*, the *grace*, the *strength*, the *comfort* of GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT must be something real, something for which HIS faithful people have a right to look.

Time would fail to go over in detail with all the particular offices of the BLESSED SPIRIT, and our attention will now be confined to those mentioned in the beautiful collect for this day.

First, then, we beseech the ALMIGHTY ONE to grant us, by the light of the HOLY SPIRIT, "*to have a right judgment in all things.*" When this prayer is answered, we are actually in possession of a higher faculty to direct us in seasons of perplexity and doubt. The instances are numberless in daily life, when we know not what course is right, what opinion correct; instances when our disturbed and bewildered minds may be set at rest, if we will but fervently implore the help and guidance of the BLESSED SPIRIT.

Our SAVIOUR calls HIM "the SPIRIT of *Truth*," because one part of HIS gracious office is to guide HIS people "*into all truth.*" [St. John xvi: 13].

Alas! how often do we forget this wonderful privilege which GOD has granted us! Our advice is asked by some one who may think it worth having; or there may be two courses of life open before us, and we are uncertain which to choose; and so, in a multitude of similar cases, it may be of the utmost importance that we should decide wisely; and yet, it

seldom occurs, even to well-disposed Christians, that it is not only their *privilege*, but their *duty*, to ask the HOLY SPIRIT to direct them aright! Serious blunders are made, and unfortunate consequences follow, and all, because in the pride of our hearts, we lean unto our own understanding, and refuse to look to a higher source for wisdom.

“Take GOD into thy counsel,” as one has quaintly said. “Heaven overlooketh hell; GOD can at any moment see what plots are hatching there against thee.”

As the sun can only be seen by his own light, so it is the light of the HOLY SPIRIT which must direct our steps, if we would have “a right judgment” as to the way of duty and success.

Again, we beseech the good LORD in the collect for this day, that we may “*evermore rejoice in the holy comfort*,” which it is one of the offices of the BLESSED SPIRIT to impart.

Religion is not the dull and dreary thing which strangers to it suppose. There is both *joy* and *peace* secured to those who love and obey GOD.

“Rejoice evermore,” is St. Paul’s direction to the Christian, [1st Thess. v: 16]; and so he *can* and *ought*. It can only be accomplished, however, through the support and strength of the HOLY SPIRIT.

You may go into hovels of poverty and wretchedness, and if the inmates are followers of CHRIST, you will find Christian cheerfulness shining forth amidst all the discomforts and privations of their lot. They have an ALMIGHTY COMFORTER to help them. Noth-

ing short of this could enable them, in uncomplaining silence, to bear up thus bravely against want, and cold; and thread-bare garments, and hunger, and sickness, and neglect, and suffering; against future days on earth, hopelessly dark and discouraging.

All of us, whatever our station in life, must have our own trials and sorrows. Sickness and death will come into our houses, and we shall need comfort such as the world can never give; and this comfort, thank God, we are sure to find in the tender sympathy of the HOLY SPIRIT.

*"Made partakers of the HOLY GHOST."* If such is our blessed portion, we cannot but be conscious of it. To save any from laboring under the mistake into which so many have fallen, in regard to the operations of the BLESSED SPIRIT, it should be stated here, that these are not violent and irresistible, but gentle and persuasive. You may be listening to a faithful and searching sermon, and if you give good heed to it, and pray that it may be blessed to your soul's health, God's HOLY SPIRIT will work *with* you and *in* you. On the contrary, should it be received in a careless or captious temper, no benefit will come of it, but rather harm.

A fire, in a picture, may be admirably represented by the artist, and it may call forth the admiration of all who see it, but it cannot *warm*. So, too, the hearing of sermons may interest and entertain, but the soul will receive no good, unless the HOLY SPIRIT shall implant it, and for the accomplishment of this, God's blessing must be sought.

Never imagine, my friends, that the operations of the HOLY GHOST will be so full of power as to *force* you to think and to do right, whether you will or not.

Moreover, let not the timid Christian suppose that his case is hopeless because his repentance for sin is unaccompanied with violent agitation of mind, and excruciating twinges of conscience. One may be a sincere penitent, whose experience falls far short of that of some persecuting, murderous Saul. Violence is no necessary token of genuine contrition. It is not in the strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the destructive fire, that the voice of the HOLY SPIRIT speaks to the stricken soul: but rather in the soothing notes of the gentle dove.

Once more, I remark concerning these operations of the HOLY GHOST upon us, that they are not sudden, but slow, gradual, and progressive. No one need be discouraged because he does not become good *all at once*. Follow closely after the LORD JESUS, in the ordinances of HIS Church, and the HOLY SPIRIT will help you, and you will assuredly "grow in grace," and in the knowledge and love of GOD.

The influences of the HOLY GHOST are not bestowed in a capricious and arbitrary manner. In proportion to the sincerity and constancy with which we wait upon the LORD in humble prayer, and in the devout reception of the holy communion, will be the measure of grace which HE bestows.

To-day, above all the days of the Christian year, let us seek for the HOLY SPIRIT'S blessing in this heavenly feast. It was on the first Whit-Sunday

that the early Christians were assembled for worship, as we are assembled now; and it was while they united together in common prayer, and partook of the blessed Sacrament, that their hearts were prepared to receive the unction of the HOLY ONE.

In the use of the same divinely appointed means of grace, may all of us be "*made partakers of the HOLY GHOST.*"

## SERMON XXXVII.

### THE TRIUNE GOD.

[TRINITY SUNDAY.]

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JESUS, when HE was baptized, went up straightway out of the water; and lo! the heavens were opened unto HIM, and HE saw the SPIRIT of GOD descending like a dove, and lighting upon HIM; and lo! a voice from heaven, saying, "This is MY beloved SON, in whom I am well pleased."—ST. MATTHEW iii. 16–17.

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IN this brief passage, (which forms a part of the second lesson for this great festival), the Three Persons of the ever-adorable TRINITY are distinctly revealed.

Our blessed LORD, the incarnate SON, is seen kneeling in the shallow waters of the Jordon, in which HE has just received baptism at the hands of St. John; the HOLY SPIRIT descends upon HIM in the form of a gentle dove; while the voice of the ALMIGHTY FATHER acknowledges HIM to be HIS well-beloved SON.

This Feast of Trinity Sunday is the consummation of the Christian year, and the Sundays that follow are only reflections of it.

Our sympathies are strongly called forth, as we travel onward with the SAVIOUR, from the manger to  
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the cross, until on Ascension-day, we stand with the disciples on Mount Olivet, and behold HIM, in the light of open day, rising up a mighty conqueror, and passing into the heavens to take HIS seat on the right hand of the ETERNAL FATHER'S throne.

We still need, however, the distinct recognition of HIS "glorious GODHEAD," which is made in the services to-day, to remind us always, that it was not more important for us that the SAVIOUR of the world should come as very *man*, than that HE should still be very GOD.

You cannot have failed to observe the appropriateness of the services for the occasion. In the Old Testament Lesson, the work of creation is described. And, mark the opening words! "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth."

Here, in the Hebrew, there is a plural noun and a singular verb; plurality and unity in the name of GOD.

Again, "GOD said let US make man in OUR image, after OUR likeness;" and so "GOD created man in HIS own image;" plurality and unity, as before.

The striking grasping together of the Three Persons of the Trinity, in the picture of our SAVIOUR'S baptism in the text, has been already noticed.

In the grand old collect, while acknowledging "the glory of the eternal TRINITY," we are taught, with humble reverence, to "worship the Unity," which exists in the Godhead.

The Epistle exhibits this "unity of the DIVINE MAJESTY," as beheld by St. John, in the visions of the Apocalypse.



ONE appears seated on the throne of heaven, whom the four living creatures worship in the thrice repeated ascription of holiness.

Our SAVIOUR'S remarkable words in the Gospel need hardly be dwelt upon, as affording additional and uncontrovertable evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity. "I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

CHRIST JESUS, the Second Person of the Trinity, is the one who speaks; the HOLY SPIRIT, the Third Person, is mentioned as the REGENERATOR, in the baptism of water; and the FATHER, the First Person of the Trinity, is referred to, "whose is the Kingdom," into which we are brought by this Sacrament.

The name of Trinity, or Threeness (as it was expressed in old English), is not found in the Bible; but this is no good reason why it should not be used, as being the most convenient term for expressing an idea conveyed to us in various forms of words.

*Omniscience* and *Omnipresence* are not Scriptural terms, but they are constantly employed, instead of the round-about expressions, the ONE who knows all things, and who possesses all power.

The doctrine of a Trinity, in Unity, is not, however, an arbitrary assumption, or an attempt to be wise above measure, concerning a subject so difficult to grasp, but it is one which arises of necessity from the consideration of various passages of the Bible, which, while they seem to clash with, and to contradict each other, must in fact, be consistent and harmonious.

At our baptism, the name of the blessed TRINITY is imprinted on our foreheads, as the sign and seal of our discipleship, and in token that we belong to this one true and holy GOD, maker of all things visible and invisible, and now known to HIS creatures under the adorable name of FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST.

There is a profound mystery in all this; a mystery which we cannot presume to *explain*, any more than we can unravel a thousand other wonderful things, the truth of which we never venture to *deny*. There is, however, nothing in the doctrine which should cause us to stagger through unbelief. The light of the sun, and of the moon, and of the air, while in nature and substance they are one, yet they are three distinct lights. The light of the sun is derived from none, and is a light by itself; the light of the moon is borrowed from the sun, and the light of the air is borrowed from them both. And so, the Divine Nature is one, and the DIVINE PERSONS three; subsisting, after a diverse manner, in one and the same nature.

Concerning GOD the FATHER, we know that HE made us, and all the world; of GOD the SON, that HE redeemed us by HIS blood; and of the HOLY GHOST, that HE is our SANCTIFIER, GUIDE, and COMFORTER.

As it is quite possible for us to be familiar with many things about an earthly friend, without knowing all that we could wish, much more is this the case in regard to that ALMIGHTY ONE, whom no mortal can find out unto perfection

In this life, we experience HIS wonderful goodness, day by day, and we understand HIS character and attributes, so far as HE sees fit to reveal them. Hereafter, in a higher and holier state, we shall be permitted to draw nearer to HIS glorious presence, and to behold HIM with unclouded vision.

I spoke of GOD the FATHER, as the *Maker* of all things, and so, indeed, HE is; and yet, so entirely do the Three Persons of the Trinity unite in every act, that the ETERNAL SON, and the ever BLESSED SPIRIT are said, in other passages, to have shared in the work of creation. [St. John i: 3; Job xxvi: 13; Ps. xxxiii: 6]. In the HOLY TRINITY, therefore, we do not think merely of two numbers, three and one, but of one ALMIGHTY BEING, whom we do know, and of Three whom we know in HIM.

Our blessed LORD has taught us, that we should look to the adorable TRINITY as the model of Church-unity, even in this imperfect state, by praying that the scattered members of HIS great family may be one in GOD, as HE HIMSELF is one with the FATHER. [St. John xvii: 20-1].

The doctrine of the Trinity was not so clearly revealed to the Jews, as it has been to Christians, because they were always hemmed in by ignorant and idolatrous nations, and might easily have confounded it with the false doctrine of a plurality of Gods. Yet, even under the older dispensation of types and shadows, it could be discerned by those who regarded these things with a spiritual eye.

After the creation of Adam, in which the decision

of the Eternal council was carried out, "Let Us make man in OUR image;" we find our first parents dwelling in happiness amidst the bowers of Eden. A BEING, whom they recognized and adored as GOD, conversed with them, and they beheld His face unawed.

How can this undoubted fact be reconciled with the declaration in St. John's Gospel, so many ages afterwards, "*No man hath seen GOD at any time*; the only begotten SON, who is in the bosom of the FATHER, HE hath declared HIM." [i: 18]. This would appear to be a flat contradiction of what we are told in Genesis; but the doctrine of the Trinity solves the mystery at once. Indeed, our SAVIOUR explained it, when HE said, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known ME, Philip? He that hath seen ME, hath seen the FATHER." [St. John xiv: 9].

So indivisible is the Godhead of the Persons in the ever-blessed TRINITY; so inseparable is the FATHER from the SON, in essence, although distinct from HIM in person, that when the eternal WORD was "made man," and abode for long years upon the earth, whosoever beheld HIM, beheld the FATHER also.

No human eye has ever looked upon the ALMIGHTY FATHER, the absolute fountain of Deity, except so far as the Godhead of the FATHER is one with that of the SON; and no created thing has ever felt the quickening life of the FATHER, save as it is one with the quickening life of GOD the HOLY GHOST. It has been one of the offices of the SON, from the beginning of the world, to "declare" the FATHER unto men.

It was none other than GOD the SON, who, in the person of an angel, spake to Abraham, [Genesis xviii: 2-22]; to Jacob, [xxxii: 24-30]; to Moses, [Exodus iii: 2-6]; to the chiefs of Israel, [xxiv: 9-11]; to Gideon, [Judges vi: 11-24]; to Manoah and his wife, [xiii: 3-22]; to Isaiah, [vi:]; and others. And when, in order to pay the full price of our redemption, the ETERNAL SON condescended to lay aside HIS Divine glory, which HE had with the FATHER before the world was, and to be born as a man, that, in our human nature, HE might fully sympathize with us in our weaknesses and infirmities; and, as man, HE might endure the agonies of the cross; the whole Trinity, itself unchanged, assumed a new and wonderful relation to us. "In this was manifested the love of GOD towards us, because GOD sent HIS only begotten SON into the world, that we might live through HIM." [St. John iv: 9]. Amazing condescension of the ALMIGHTY FATHER, that HE should agree to such a plan for the redemption of our sinful race; and transcendent the love of the ETERNAL SON, that HE should become the meek and uncomplaining Victim, on whose devoted head the Divine wrath might be poured out, and thus the majesty of Law be sustained!

GOD the FATHER *sent* HIS SON, that SON whom, from all eternity, HE had loved with an affection pure and exalted as HIS own holy and infinite nature. Even angels cannot appreciate the greatness of this love, which thus prompted the ALMIGHTY FATHER to deliver up HIS own dear SON for our redemp-

tion: Cherubim and Seraphim are unable to comprehend it.

The fact that our adorable SAVIOUR is no mere man, nor angelic being, but the SON of GOD, and one with the FATHER, in majesty and might, affords us the strongest possible assurance that HE is able and willing to become "the Author of eternal salvation unto all that obey HIM." [Hebrews v: 9].

Moreover, now that our LORD JESUS CHRIST has gone back to the throne of HIS glory, HE has not left HIS believing people comfortless; but the HOLY GHOST, the Third Person of the Trinity, has come into the world, to abide with them until the close of this dispensation of grace and mercy.

The titles bestowed upon the BLESSED SPIRIT, in the Bible, proclaim HIS divinity and power. HE is called "the SPIRIT of Grace," [Heb. x: 29]; "the SPIRIT of Glory," [1st Pet. iv: 14]; "the SPIRIT of Life," [Rom. viii: 2]; the Searcher of the things of God, [1st Cor. ii: 10]; "the HOLY SPIRIT of Promise," [Ephes. i: 13]; "the SPIRIT of Truth," [St. John xiv: 17]; "the Quickening SPIRIT," [1st Pet. iii: 18]; "the SPIRIT of Adoption," [Rom. viii: 15]; "the SPIRIT of Wisdom and Understanding," [Ps. xi: 2]; "the SPIRIT of Holiness," [Rom. i: 4]; the GUIDE, the TEACHER, and the COMFORTER. [St. John xiv: 16].

The *emblems* under which the HOLY SPIRIT is represented, sustain the same view of HIS Divine character, which the language of the Scriptures so distinctly conveys. HE is described under the figure of *Water*,

because of HIS purifying, refreshing, and abundant power in making clean, and in renewing our corrupt hearts; under the figure of *Fire*, to signify HIS illuminating and searching operations upon the mind and conscience; under the figure of a *Wind*, blowing hither and thither, without let or hindrance, because of HIS independent, powerful, and reviving work; under the figure of *Oil*, to denote HIS gracious gifts of consecration and blessing, of healing and of comfort; under the figure of a *Seal*, impressing and authenticating, as the peculiar property of CHRIST JESUS, those who come with repentance and faith, to the holy rite of Confirmation; and so, also, under other figures, equally beautiful and significant. Indeed, every onward step, from the region of the shadow of death, where sin and Satan had left us, to the brightness and blessedness of the land of everlasting life, is marked by the direct control, and the sympathizing, kindly care of the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, one with the FATHER and SON, in power, and dominion, and glory.

The practical importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, which the holy Church throughout the world commemorates to-day, may be gathered from a single sentence in the writings of St. Paul. "Through CHRIST JESUS we have access by one SPIRIT unto the FATHER." [Ephes. ii: 18].

All our hopes of eternal happiness depend on this, that, in *some* way, we guilty sinners may become reconciled unto GOD.

Our blessed SAVIOUR is quite able to release us

from the burden of our sins, because HE is a DIVINE PERSON; the everlasting SON of the FATHER.

We need not despair of being successful in our attempts to serve and please GOD in newness of life, since the HOLY GHOST, who is also a DIVINE PERSON, is ready to be our HELPER, and will always be near us, in every time of need.

Daily, therefore, let us lift up our hearts in prayer to the ALMIGHTY ONE, that HE will bestow upon us the spirit of obedience and love. Then will the DIVINE COMFORTER dwell in us, and bless us; CHRIST JESUS will love us, and will manifest HIMSELF unto us; and the ALMIGHTY FATHER will behold us with favor, and they will come, and make their abode with us.

“JEHOVAH! FATHER, SPIRIT, SON,  
Mysterious GODHEAD, three in ONE;  
Before THY throne we sinners bend,  
Grace, pardon, life to us extend!”



## SERMON XXXVIII.

### THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

[FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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In Hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.—ST. LUKE xvi:  
*part of the 23d verse.*

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THE impression left on the mind by a large proportion of obituary notices, and funeral addresses is this, that all people who have occupied prominent positions in the world, and especially, if they have been rich, are translated to very comfortable quarters when they die.

I am willing to leave it to any of you to say whether, in the course of your whole lives, you can call to mind a dozen instances, in which even the slightest doubt was expressed concerning the future happiness of the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, who have gone hence to give account to GOD for the deeds done in the body. And yet, when we think of the matter seriously and soberly, we know that very many such characters will, at the last dreadful day, seek to hide themselves in the

dens and caves of the earth, and call upon the rocks and mountains to shield them from the wrath of the LAMB.

A brief meditation on the parable of our blessed LORD, which you have heard in the Gospel for the day, may serve to make us wiser, and more careful in our conduct.

In one particular, you will observe that it is unlike any other parable which HE spake, for it does not relate to this life, nor to the life to come; but to the mysterious life between the two.

The persons introduced to our notice occupy extreme positions in the social scale; the one a rich man, and the other a beggar. We are by no means warranted in painting the character of the rich man in darker colors than he deserved; nor yet in investing the beggar with graces and virtues which we are not told that he possessed. I shall endeavor to deal fairly and impartially with them both.

Although the condition of the rich man, after death, is described in the text as terrible in the extreme, we have no reason to suppose, from the account which our SAVIOUR gives of him, that he was one of those hardened and depraved persons, for whom it is so difficult to feel any sympathy at all. So far from this, it appears from the parable that he had tender feelings towards his kindred; since, even in the depth of his own wretchedness, he remembered, with apprehension and alarm, the five surviving brothers, who were living in the sumptuous and careless way, which he had done. He felt so solicitous for them, that he put forth

strong and repeated efforts to have them warned of their danger.

We must seek to become better acquainted with the rich man, that we may discover the cause of his ruin.

He lived in affluence and enjoyment; a stranger to earthly want and dependency; and yet, countless thousands have been the possessors of *equal*, and even of *more abundant* wealth, and have passed safely from the occupations of *time*, to the reward of *eternity*.

The rich man "was clothed in purple and fine linen," articles of dress of the most costly kind; but this, we are sure, had not been the ground of his condemnation.

True, he was *rich*; and so were Abraham, and Solomon, and David, and many whom we have known, who are now safe in Paradise.

True, he was well and becomingly attired; and so are the lilies of the field, whose beautiful adorning GOD HIMSELF provides. Purple and fine linen have often been the vesture of saints.

True, he "fared sumptuously," but an abundant, and even a luxurious table by no means involves intemperance or gluttony.

No, it was for none of these things that the rich man was punished.

Look out by his palace-gate, and you will discover the real cause. A poor, neglected, and despised beggar lies there; so poor that he wants the necessities of life; so hungry that he lies begging for the refuse of his neighbor's table; so well-nigh naked that he cannot cover the wounds which disfigure his famished body; so friendless that, when he is cast at the rich

man's gate, he has none to relieve or help him; dogs his companions, and the food of dogs, not the food he *possesses*, but the food he craves.

Here was an opportunity for the rich man to show whether or not he had any real sympathy; but, alas! for him; although he was to a certain extent amiable, and not altogether destitute of *good feelings*, he was lacking in qualities which GOD requires and approves; such as an earnestness in working out our own salvation, and a living spirit of charity which not only relieves the forlorn sufferer, in his sickness and destitution, but discovers in that poor, poverty-stricken one, a member of CHRIST's own body.

Very little is told concerning Lazarus, beyond the simple fact of his poverty and wretchedness. We may give him credit for patience under his grievous trials, and for seeking comfort where alone it may be found. Hence, it came to pass, that a righteous GOD, who putteth down the mighty from their seat, but exalteth the humble and the meek, was preparing, in the course of HIS providence, to fill the hungry with good things, and to send the rich empty away.

There were wide *differences*, as we have seen, between the rich man and the poor; and, at the same time, *points of resemblance*, also, equally worthy of notice. They were both mortal, both doomed to die, and so we have hardly read in the parable that "the *beggar* died," than we read that "the *rich* man, also, died."

Nor was this the only thing in common between them; both were alike in the *immortality of their souls*.

\* The poorest, most ignorant outcast who dwells on the face of the earth has a soul as incapable of destruction as that of the greatest and the wisest. Both alike must render an account unto God.

Lazarus had borne his poverty, and his loathsome sickness with uncomplaining patience, and the very lack of *bodily* comforts had led him to give more thought to the welfare of his *soul*. When death came to his relief, his condition was instantly changed. What a wonderful transition from his pallet on the cold ground, to the arms of angels; from the rich man's gate, to the golden gate of Paradise!

The rich man dies, and such funeral honors are paid to him, that his *burial* is mentioned even amongst the brief details of the parable. Money can purchase pomp and pageantry for his body; but where was then his undying soul? The text furnishes the answer: "*In Hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.*"

How wonderfully the contrast between the two men is now reversed! Poor, despised Lazarus has found a shelter in Abraham's bosom, another name for Paradise, where the souls of the faithful, in joyful expectation, await the final awards of the judgment.

The rich man already in torment; not yet, consigned, indeed, to the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; but, nevertheless, *in torment*.

His are the torments arising from the sudden and fearful change which death has wrought in his condition; his the torments of unallayed desires; the torments of bitter self-reproach; torments from the de-

spairing anguish of his doomed spirit; torments from the direct infliction of GOD's terrible indignation; torments from having the realms of blessedness within the range of his distracted vision.

The tongue of the rich man, so lately pampered with the costliest meats and drinks, parched for the want of one drop of water which he craved.

He could not monopolize the good of *both* worlds, and he chose to have his portion here. The rich man enjoyed life while it lasted, but it is done with now; and, "in Hell, he lifted up his eyes, being in torments." So little does it profit one to "gain the whole world," if his soul must be paid as the price of it.

While the beggar's humble name is written in the Lamb's book of Life, and the very angels call him Lazarus, the pampered son of prosperity who allowed him to suffer at his gate, has no name; no place among the blessed.

There are many counterparts of the rich man and the poor man, whom our SAVIOUR brings before us in the parable, now living in the world; and those who are devoted to ease and self-indulgence, would do well to ponder the warning which has been given to all of us to-day.

I have no doubt that every Christian congregation numbers more than one, far worse than the rich man in the parable, who are hoping to find a home in heaven. It is a sin on the part of GOD's ministers to leave them in delusion and danger; a sin which I have no wish to bear.

I beg you to notice, therefore, that the rich man

who finds himself *in torments*, after death, is charged by our blessed LORD with no grievous crime. It was no sin that he was rich, or that he enjoyed the comforts and luxuries which his abundant means enabled him to provide; but it *was* a sin that he was selfish and unfeeling. If we trace this back to its hidden spring, we find it to have been *unbelief*. I do not mean by this a denial of GOD'S existence, or that HE has claims upon HIS intelligent creatures, but a failure to realize this truth, *that the rewards of the unseen world of righteousness and peace can only be secured by self-denials, and by a diligent effort to serve and please GOD.*

The rich man, in the parable, was not grossly wicked, but he loved his own ease so well that he shut himself up, as much as possible, from unpleasant sights and distressing sounds, and as one act of kindness to poor Lazarus might encourage him to come again, he left him to starve at his gate, and to trust to the compassion of the dogs.

We look upon such conduct now as something not to be admired, but it is so common, that little thought is bestowed upon it. There is ONE, however, who gives it thought!

The rich man was not vicious, nor openly immoral, and still, GOD, the righteous JUDGE, consigned him to torment for the sin which I have mentioned, and for nothing more.

Alas! for those who are imitating him in his life on earth; and who, if they do not speedily repent and amend, will find themselves in the realms of darkness,

where the gnawing worm never dies, and the fires are unquenchable.

I need hardly remind you how distinctly this point is brought out in the parable. An impassable gulf will cut off all communication between the world of blessedness and the world of woe. No passing *now*, for those who would make their escape from torment; no passing, ages hence; no passing, for evermore!

In those dismal realms of eternal night, there will be weeping, and wailing, and remorse; but *no repentance, no faith, no pardon.*

Out of pure love and pity for us, our blessed LORD spake the parable which we have heard to-day. May HIS good SPIRIT stir up our slumbering consciences, lest the sneers of subtle unbelief, self-indulgence, and heartless indifference to the sufferings of others, prove our everlasting ruin!

The parable has its lesson for the rich and for the poor. To the rich, it says, "Look to it well and constantly, that you incur not the future misery of the selfish man, whom our SAVIOUR has so carefully described. Do not try to forget the poor, nor begrudge to help them when you can. You may be well able always to *feast*; but if you make light of *fasting*, and never practice it, you will hunger hereafter, when the humble and the faithful shall eat bread in GOD's kingdom."

The parable has its word of counsel for the poor: "Your misery may be like that of Lazarus; but if you study to be submissive and trusting as he was,



poverty and sickness will prove incentives to holy living, and the patient waiting for CHRIST."

Some of you may have been accustomed to regard self-indulgence as a trifling fault, and even as no fault at all; but our SAVIOUR has taught us, in the Gospel for the day, that for the gratification of this weakness, the rich man went to his grave helpless and hopeless, and, in hell, lifted up his eyes, being in torments!

## SERMON XXXIX.

### RESPECT FOR SUPERIORS.

[SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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As he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him.—2D KINGS ii. *part of the 23d verse.*

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ALTHOUGH so often and so plainly taught, that rewards will follow good actions, and punishment, bad ones, we find it difficult to realize the fact. And even when the mind yields to the conviction, that a certain course of conduct will produce pleasure, and another pain, we are slow to learn how much of happiness or misery depends upon a seemingly unimportant cause.

The startling history connected with the text, will help to place these matters in their true light.

The good Prophet Elisha was going up from Jericho to Bethel; one of the strong-holds of Ahab's idolatry. The reception which he met with, was such as might have been expected. As he drew near the wicked town, he was assailed by a rabble of young black-guards, who shouted after him (very probably at the instigation of their parents), "Go up, thou bald-head! go up, thou bald-head!"

These youths, you observe, did not meet with Elisha by *accident*, but they came out of the town on *purpose* to insult him. They had known old meek Elijah, who had preceded him in the prophetical office, and they had heard of his having been carried up into heaven in a chariot of fire. It was to this remarkable event that they referred, when they said to Elisha, "Go up, thou bald-head," *i. e.*, "Go up where your master has gone, and then the world will be rid of both of you!"

*Baldness*, being often produced by that loathsome disease, the *leprosy*, was a term of great indignity and contempt among the Israelites; and it was used in this sense by these ill-bred and wicked young persons. "The offence, involving as it did a blasphemous insult upon one of the LORD's most signal acts, made a near approach to what in the New Testament is called *the sin against the HOLY GHOST*. It became the LORD to vindicate HIS own honor among a people governed by sensible dispensations of judgments and of mercy; and it became HIM to vindicate the character and authority of HIS anointed Prophet at the outset of his high career." [Kitto's Solomon and the Kings, p. 282].

We are not surprised, therefore, to read that Elisha "turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD." [23, 24]. He "*cursed*" them; but not from a sense of offended dignity. "He *cursed* them," because he was prompted by the ALMIGHTY to do so. But, although Elisha did thus "*curse*" them, he left it for the LORD, whom he served, to *punish*. And mark the speedy judgment which

followed. "There came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." [24.]\*

Fault-finders are fond of pointing out what they choose to call the *cruelty* of this punishment, forgetting that it was the ALMIGHTY who sent it, and not the Prophet.

Moreover, they remind us that, according to the literal reading of the sacred word, it was "*little children*" who suffered this vengeance; and that, very likely, they acted without consideration, in venturing to insult Elisha. The word *children*, according to Hebrew usage, is, by no means, confined to those of infant years, but refers to *young persons* of either sex, who have not reached adult age. Indeed, the very word, here translated *child*, "is applied to Ishmael when he was about fourteen years old, [Gen. xxi: 16]; to Isaac when he was grown up to be a young man, [Gen. xxii: 12]; Hamor of Shechem, when of marriageable age, [Gen. xxxiv: 20]; to Joseph when he was seventeen, [Gen. xxxvii: 2]; to Gideon's son Jether, when old enough to be ordained to slay two kings, [Judges viii: 20]; to Solomon after he had become king, [1st Kings iii: 7]; to the four hundred Amalekites who escaped on camels, [1st Sam. xxx:

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\* "The bear that destroyed these children, was, no doubt, the *Ursus Syriacus*, the Palestine representative of the *U. Vctos* of North Europe; it was noticed by Hemprich and Ehrenberg, on the Macurel, one of the summits of Lebanon; and, according to Dr. Thompson, it is still found on the high mountains of that part of the country." [*London Quarterly* for July, 1863, p. 32.]

17]; to Elisha's servant Gehazi, [2d Kings iv: 12]; to the sons of the prophets who anointed Jehu, [2d Kings ix: 4]; to the two hundred and thirty-two attendants of the princes of the provinces who went out against Benhadad, [1st Kings xx: 15]; and to the soldiers of the Assyrian King, etc., [2d Kings xix: 6];" [Kitto, p. 280].

Here the objector will be sure to remind us that, in the narrative which we are commenting upon, the offenders are not only called "*children*," but "*little children*." We do not deny it. And yet, in one of the passages to which we have just referred, Solomon calls himself "*a little child*," when he knew that he was a well-grown young man. And again, it should be noted, "that although those who came out against the Prophet are called '*little children*,' the '*little*' is dropped where the forty-two who are slain are mentioned. Even the word for '*children*' is then changed to another, (*jeladim*, singular *jelad*); and, although that word is of nearly synonymous use and application with the other, the change, with the dropping of the word '*little*,' is probably intended to mark the distinction. Wherever there is a mob of idle young men, there is sure to be a number of mischievous urchins, who shout and bawl, as they do, without knowing much of the matter. Although, therefore, there were no doubt little children among this rabble of young Bethelites, there is every reason to suppose that the forty-two *of them* who were destroyed, were the oldest ones, the ringleaders of the set, and who very well knew what they were about."

We are quite sure that when Elisha "cursed them in the name of the LORD," that he merely acted as a minister of the SUPREME GOVERNOR of the world, and, by HIS direction, foretold the punishment which was about to be inflicted on the hardened offenders. Had his cursing been prompted by his own petulant temper, or as an act of revenge, such signal vengeance would not have followed his words. [See Horne's Introduction, i: p. 412].

1. The first conclusion to be drawn from this incident is, that the ALMIGHTY *hates* sin, and will assuredly *punish* it. Since the Gospel dispensation began, it is true that offenders do not always receive *temporal* chastisement for their faults; but there is no real comfort in this. Our *privileges* are much greater than those of the Jews, and our *responsibilities* increase in the same ratio. If we escape GOD's vengeance in *this* life, our destinies are in the hands of HIM who "is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." [St. Matt. x: 28]. The idle mocker, and the hardened reprobate, may, indeed, *ridicule* and *make light* of the priest or prophet of the MOST HIGH, and no ravenous wild beasts "come forth from the wood" to destroy; but it is only rendering their punishment more terrible, when the same ALMIGHTY JUDGE is heard to say, in reference to their *future* lot, "Consider this, ye that forget GOD, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." [Ps. 1: 22].

2. Another point settled by this history is, that *the consequences of sins are much more important than we are apt to suppose.*

Some might be disposed to consider the punishment as quite too grievous for the offence, when the thoughtless, impertinent ribaldry of a set of ill-governed young people, in ridiculing the infirmities of an old man, was so suddenly checked by an attack of the savage bears. But GOD forms a different judgment of such conduct. HE saw in it the evidences of hard and unfeeling hearts. HE marked, with displeasure, this insult offered to HIS Prophet, and HE counted it as an offence against HIS own honor and majesty.

Our SAVIOUR tells us that "he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much," [St. Luke xvi: 10]; meaning, thereby, that the *principle* from which we act is to be looked to, rather than the *act itself*, in discovering the true state of the heart. Sins are not only to be shunned for the *direct evils* which they bring upon us in *this* life, but also for their *indirect* influence in rendering us unfit for a life of blessedness hereafter. No sin is trifling, when considered in all its bearings, and with reference to the consequences which it may possibly produce. It is in *this* light that the All-seeing ONE regards our misdoings. No accidental circumstances limit or disturb HIS vision.

3. A third lesson taught in this history is *the respect which is due to the aged*.

The wicked youths who mocked the Prophet had either *never learned* this duty, or they most sadly *neglected* it. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man," was a binding law, as far back as the days of Moses. [Levit. xix: 32].

"Age, even apart from its qualities, has in it solem-

nity. The LORD would thus solemnize us in the midst of our pursuits. "Lo! the shadow of eternity! for one cometh who is almost in eternity already. His head and beard white as snow, indicate his speedy appearance before the Ancient of Days, the hair of whose head is as pure wool." [Bonar's Leviticus, p. 356].

This sentiment of reverence is one of the noblest attributes of the human mind. It elevates the character. It adds a gentle and winning softness to every kindred grace. The world, however, is full of unruly and heedless youths, who have no more consideration for the claims of age, than those who paid so dearly for making sport of the Prophet.

But their sin is none the less remembered, because no evil overtakes them *now*. Do they never expect to become old themselves? Is such conduct, on their part, calculated to prepare smooth paths for their feet, when the down-hill journey of life has begun? Would they wish a full measure of the unkindness which they have shown to others, to be poured upon themselves?

"My young friends, let me claim your kindness for the old. They are well entitled to your sympathy. Through this bright world they move mistily, and though they rise as soon as the birds begin to sing, they cannot hear the music. Their limbs are stiff, their senses dull, and that body which was once their beautiful abode, and their willing servant, has become a cage and a heavy clog. And they have outlived most of those dear companions, with whom they once



took sweet counsel. Make it up to them as well as you can. Be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. And should extreme infirmity, or occasional fretfulness try your patience, remember that to all intents you were once the same, and may be the same again; in second childhood, as in first, the debtor of other's patience, and tenderness, and magnanimity." [Hamilton's "Royal Preacher," pp. 316-7].

4. One other important lesson may be learned from this history. Elisha was the appointed servant of God, sent by HIM to warn and instruct. The punishment visited upon the *young*, who thoughtlessly made light of him, shows what respect should be felt for the office of the ministry, whether filled by prophet or priest, and how dangerous it is to treat those who hold it with contempt.

This respect is due to the *office*, and is not to be withheld, because we do not fancy the *individual* who holds it. Our blessed LORD said of the Scribes and Pharisees of HIS day, who were proverbially unworthy of their place, that they "sat in Moses' seat," and that, until they were lawfully removed, "all things which they charged people to observe," they should carefully "observe and do." [St. Matt. xxiii: 2, 3]. The XXVth Article of Religion enjoins the same duty.

"He that despiseth you," says our adorable SAVIOUR to the humblest ambassador whom HE sends forth with clear credentials, for what he does, "he that despiseth *you*, despiseth ME." [St. Luke x: 16].

No apology *can*, or *ought* to be offered for unworthy ministers. They will have their own fearful account

to give in the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. It is only of the duty of the people, of which I speak.

"Know them which labor among you," writes the Apostle, "and are over you in the LORD, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." [Thess. v: 12-13].

As in building up a great structure, some bring stones, some timber, and some, perhaps, only nails, yet, these last serve to fasten the work in its place; so, in the spiritual building, GOD'S Church, the minister who possesses least of worldly wisdom and eloquence, may furnish the nail which is to perform an important office. Goldsmith's picture of the faithful clergyman, is true of many a one, upon whom no worldly honor is bestowed.

"In his duty prompt at every call,  
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all;  
And as a bird each fond endearment tries  
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,  
He tried each art, reprov'd each dull delay,  
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way."

Would not Elisha have well deserved the respect and love of old and young, had no other good deed of his been known, besides his kindness and effectual prayer in behalf of the widow's son? And what sum of silver or gold would form any equivalent for the offices of the minister who baptizes, and blesses the bread and the cup in the holy supper? What thanks can adequately repay his counsels and consolations at *one* sick and dying bed?

Are not respect, and forbearance, and confidence, and affection his rightful due? And will not the **ALMIGHTY** look with just displeasure upon such as misrepresent, and mock, and make light of the faithful messenger whom **HE** has sent?

Here, then, are four important lessons taught in the oft-told story of Elisha cursing the wicked youths who insulted him in the way: first, that **GOD** hates sin, and will assuredly punish it; second, that the consequences of sins are much more important than we are apt to suppose; third, that the young are bound to show respect to the aged; and, fourth, that the ministers of **GOD** ought never to be treated with contempt. Let us carry home these lessons, my friends, and try to be the better for them.

## SERMON XL.

### THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE GOOD TO BE SOUGHT FOR.

[THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

---

I am a companion of all them that fear THEE, and of them that keep THY precepts.—PSALM cxix. 63.

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THE person who can say this may well be called happy. He has chosen for himself one of the most effectual safe-guards of life.

The soul longs for society and for sympathy, and congeniality of character and tastes unite us together in companionships which are the cause either of good or evil; aye, of good or evil which shall outlast our present period of probation.

It is hard to pass through this cold and selfish world and have no real friends; and yet, to get friends and to *keep* them, is one the most difficult things to be accomplished. "So long as there is blossom on the trees and honey in the blossom, the bees will frequent them in crowds, and fill the place with music; but when the blossom is over and the honey is gone, the bees too will all disappear. The same happens in the

world with men. In the abode of fortune and pleasure, friends will be found in plenty; but when fortune flies, they fly along with it." [Gotthold]. The lesson taught by such a melancholy fact, is this: that in the choice of associates, we should look for those who are good and true of heart; even for such as are children of God.

I shall not waste any words in general remarks on friendship, but confine myself closely to the point suggested by the text: *the advantages of associating with the good, and the evils of having the irreligious for familiar friends.*

Every person, whether young or old, is the better or worse, according to the character of those with whom he is brought into daily contact.

"What a pleasant and profitable day!" is often the exclamation of those who have passed a few hours in the company of the intelligent and the refined. "How stupid and intolerable!" is the description called forth by the trifling discourse which has frittered away a portion of precious time, which might have been turned to so much better account. Robert Hall, who probably spoke as few idle words as most men, used to say, on returning from a party which he had kept alive by the brilliancy and variety of his observations, but where he had neglected to guide the flow of conversation into the most profitable channels, "Ah! sir, I have again contributed to the loss of an evening, as to every thing truly valuable; go home with me, that we may spend at least one hour in a manner which becomes us." [Sir James Mackintosh].

Of course the *best* of people are sometimes, of *necessity*, obliged to associate with those whose tastes are most uncongenial. Our DIVINE MASTER was placed in circumstances such as these, and HE never, in a single instance, showed HIMSELF reserved, fastidious, or austere. HE would, by no means, have chosen this companionship, but when brought into it, by the ordinary course of duty, HE cheerfully set about scattering good seed, even among associates of very scanty promise. The Christian should here learn a lesson from his LORD.

Alexander Knox expressed the opinion of thousands, when he wrote to his friend, Bishop Jebb, "It is not religion alone that makes me shun company; it is, also, that my intellect may not be suspended. I love good sense; I love conversation; but company, so called, is the grave of conversation, and common talk its winding-sheet."

It is certainly a very serious reflection, that our intimate associates are not only exercising a most important influence upon our condition in *this* life, but upon our prospects for the next. An eminent English judge once remarked to a young man of sixteen, whom he was putting on his guard against the example of evil companions, "If I had listened to the advice of some of those who called themselves my friends, when I was young, instead of being a *judge* of the king's bench, I should have died long ago a culprit in the king's prison."

There can be no question that, when the eternal JUDGE, on the great day of final account, turns over the

terrible records in the book of His remembrance, in which the misdoings of men are noted down with a minuteness and accuracy which it is fearful to contemplate, a large proportion of those who will then be doomed to everlasting woe, will find the secret cause of their ruin traced back to the contaminating influences of evil companionship. O, it is sorrowful and sickening to think of the *ruin*, the *irretrievable* ruin, which the Devil is accomplishing in the case of thousands who *might* have been ornaments to society *here*, and the heirs of blessedness *hereafter*!

You can all call to mind melancholy examples which would serve as illustrations of our subject. A lad who has been carefully trained up by loving and devoted parents, is sent away to boarding-school, or goes to some large town to engage in business, by which he hopes his fortune will be made. While sheltered beneath his father's roof, and submitting to the wholesome restraints of parental discipline, he was respectful, reverent, truthful, sober, pure; but now like some little vessel designed only for the navigation of a quiet, placid lake; he finds himself turned adrift on the troubled and treacherous ocean of life. The lad is brought into contact, (whether at school or in the counting-house), with those who have already cast off the sacred influences of home, and who have learned the ways of a wicked world. He is shocked at first by sights and scenes so strange and revolting; but his scruples are laughed at; his reluctance to evil-doing gradually over come; and, ere long, he can smoke, swagger, and swear with the most har-

dened and depraved. We have been obliged to state what is the *natural*, and almost *inevitable result* of such unfortunate companionship, without stopping to mark its several gradual *steps*. It only adds to the gloomy shading of the picture to say that the simple-minded, the pure, and the good, who have thus yielded to the overpowering influence of bad example, have done so "with many a sigh, and many a struggle, and many a look of remembrance on those former years when they were taught to lisp the prayer of infancy, and were trained in a reverence to GOD, and for all His ways; and, even still, will a parent's parting advice haunt his memory, and a letter from home revive the sensibilities which at one time guarded and adorned him; and, at times, will the transient gleam of remorse lighten up its agony within him; and when he contrasts the profaneness and depravity of his present companions with the sacredness of all he ever heard or saw in his father's dwelling, it will almost feel as if conscience were again to resume her power, and the revisiting SPIRIT of GOD to call him back again from the paths of wickedness; and on his restless bed will the images of guilt conspire to disturb him, and the terrors of punishment offer to scare him away; and many will be the dreary and dissatisfied intervals when he shall be forced to acknowledge that, in bartering his soul for the pleasures of sin, he has bartered the peace and enjoyment of the world along with it. But, alas! the entanglements of companionship have got hold of him; the loud laugh of his partners in guilt, chases, for another season, all his despondency.



away from him; a hardening process goes on within his heart; and the deceitfulness of sin grows apace and he, at length, becomes one of the sturdiest and most unrelenting of her votaries." [Chalmer's Discourses, vol. ii., p. 158].

O, it is sad to reflect, my friends, how different might have been the condition of this amiable youth for time and for eternity; but for the terrible and soul-destroying effects of ungodly associations! Had he chosen for his intimate companions those who were children of GOD, he would have preserved, unimpaired, the innocence and purity which had been fostered amidst the sacred atmosphere of home; and been growing in favor with GOD and man.

But the world is not only a sphere of danger to the *young*, but also to those who have reached mature age. We should actually be forced to forsake it altogether, if we would avoid all intercourse with those who may do us harm. Business, pleasure, circumstances quite beyond our control; and even duty, solemn and imperative duty, bring us into the society of people whose principles and practices are the very opposite of those which we profess to be right. An angel might come within the circle of such associations and receive no harm, for he would have neither senses nor passions which could be lured on by the most seductive and powerful temptations.

We have the promise of being made like unto the angels in *another* life, if we prove ourselves faithful in *this*; but the best and holiest of mortals fall far short of their standard of holiness now. The children of GOD

are, therefore, in constant peril, even while they confine themselves to *necessary* association with the ungodly. The mere presence of a thoughtless and worldly-minded person, in our houses for a day, may chill our religious fervor; and their frivolous and irreverent conversation may sow seeds of doubt in our minds, which cannot be easily rooted out. The praise which the world sometimes bestows, may send back into the heart of the Christian his old and besetting sin of *pride*; and that contemptible fear of man, which bringeth a snare, may turn his feet aside from the rugged path of duty.

The biographies of thousands of God's dear children have recorded the narrow escapes they made from ruin, from association with the irreligious; and many have been kind enough to give us the advantage of their valuable and dear-bought experience. An English officer, in the East India service, being invited one day to a public dinner, where the commander of the district and his staff were expected to be present, observed to the friend who brought it, "Conventional usages and proprieties will oblige me to accept, although I would much rather decline. There is one way in which I find that I can be present at such entertainments and receive no damage. I endeavor to conceive to myself the LORD JESUS as seated on the opposite side of the table, and to think what HE would wish me to do and to say, when placed in such a situation; and, so long as I can keep this thought alive in my mind, I find I am free from harm." Now, if such be the dangers to which Christians are exposed,

from associating with those who have no religious principles themselves, and who make light of such principles in others, we discover, very plainly, the wisdom of that rule of conduct laid down by the Psalmist in the text: "*I am the companion of all them that fear THEE, and of them that keep THY precepts.*"

You observe that he disclaims all sympathy or connection with the wicked, and chooses for friends and associates, those who love and obey GOD. *Cheerful obedience* is always the fruit of *filial fear*; and these two features, therefore, distinguish one and the same character.

Union with our HEAVENLY FATHER is, in fact, union with HIS children. "So deadening to our spirit is the conversation of the men of this world, (however commanding their talents, or interesting their topics), that even if we have been just before enlivened by the high privilege of communion with GOD, the free and self-indulgent interchange of their society will benumb our spiritual powers, and quickly freeze them again. To underrate, therefore, the privileged association with "*them that fear GOD*, is to incur, not only a most awful responsibility in the sight of GOD; but also a most serious hazard to our own souls." [Bridge's on 119th Psalm, p. 160].

But there is more in the text than appears on the surface. When the Psalmist declares so explicitly and without reserve, "*I am the companion of all them that fear THEE, and of them that keep THY precepts,*" he implies—

1. That a congeniality of temper and spirit prevail among GOD's people. They have one common bond of union; they have one GOD and FATHER, whom they love and serve; one adorable SAVIOUR, who has shed HIS precious blood for them; and they all look forward to the same heaven as their eternal home. Even should some of the followers of JESUS exhibit features of character which are repulsive to those who have more natural refinement, or who have received larger measures of HIS grace; yet, as they bear our MASTER's image, it ill becomes us to shun them; much less to treat them with contempt. They will be our companions in a better world; they ought, therefore, to be regarded as brethren here.

2. Again, the Psalmist, in the text, declares his determination to share the fortunes and trials of GOD's people, whatever those fortunes and trials may be. He refers not only to the heavier burdens and perils which belong more exclusively to seasons of persecution; but to the ordinary labors and sacrifices which are requisite in sustaining the cause of the REDEEMER. It is the working bees which enjoy the honey, while the drones live in idleness, or find fault with the active and the prudent.

Alas! how many Christians are satisfied to see their friends bearing the burden and heat of the day, in those self-denying works, without which no congregation can prosper; while they, in their luke-warmness and inertness, hardly deign to touch such burdens with one of their fingers. It is as much the delight of the devoted Christian to aid, according to his means

and his opportunity, in supporting and spreading the Gospel, as in enjoying the precious privileges which religion brings to his own soul. A full companionship gladly accepts its full share in providing money for keeping up the services of the Church, and in the *troublesome*, and often-times, *thankless* efforts to win the thoughtless and the disobedient to the consideration of things eternal.

3. Once more, when the Psalmist assures us that he is "the companion" of all such as fear GOD, he teaches us that the real Christian will cheerfully endure his portion of reproach and suffering with his brethren.

The wounded hand and the aching foot have the responsive sympathies of the other members of the body, and are not like the artificial limb, bearing the outward semblance of hand or foot, but lacking the sensibility of the living part. And, thus, there is a *spiritual nerve* pervading the whole body, or Church of CHRIST, connecting the several members, however humble and lowly, with the DIVINE and LIVING HEAD; and when the poorest of GOD'S servants is stung by the venom of malicious hate, or battered and abused by the oppressive hand of violence, the *real* companion and friend shares in his sufferings, and responds to an unaffected sympathy.

The text, short as it is, is a very suggestive one. The old and the young, who will treasure up the *warning* which it conveys, and the direct practical instruction to be drawn from it, will be the wiser and the better for it.

"Oh! ask not, hope thou not too much  
 Of sympathy below;  
 Few are the hearts whence one same touch  
 Bids the sweet fountains flow:  
 Few—and by still conflicting powers  
 Forbidden here to meet—  
 Such ties would make this life of ours  
 Too fair for aught so fleet—

\* \* \* \* \*

It may be, that thy brother's eye  
 Sees not as thine, which turns  
 In such deep reverence to the sky  
 Where the rich sunset burns;  
 It may be, that the breath of spring,  
 Born amidst violets lone,  
 A rapture o'er thy soul can bring—  
 A dream to him unknown.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yet scorn thou not, for this, the true  
 And steadfast love of years;  
 The kindly, that from childhood grew,  
 The faithful to thy tears!  
 If there be one that o'er the dead  
 Hath in thy grief borne part,  
 And watch'd through sickness by thy bed—  
 Call his a kindred heart!"—MRS. HEMANS.

## SERMON XLI.

### THE BLESSEDNESS OF CONVERTING A SINNER.

[FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.—ST. JAMES V. 20.

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AN old soldier gave a good definition of true conversion, in the characteristic remark, "When I was a young fellow in the army, we used often to receive the word of command, '*Right about face!*' and when I became a soldier of the cross, this is just the command which I received from my CAPTAIN, still, calling me to HIM, '*right about*' from where I was before, and look a new way; and I love to obey the call."

Or, to vary the illustration, conversion is like refitting an old ship, and employing it in the service of a new and better master. By nature, we are laden with corruptions, and vanities, and sins, and are sailing under the colors of the world. When the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT, and the power of DIVINE grace have brought one to a sounder mind, then the blessed REDEEMER takes possession of the frail and sinking ship; places on board a new pilot and a reliable

compass; turns the prow another way, for a safe and prosperous voyage towards the land of everlasting life.

The manner and the mode of conversion is various. "Many of the LORD's people are, by HIS marvellous kindness, exempted from the exceeding rigor of the terrors of Sinai, and the excessive griefs engendered by the working of the law. The wind of the SPIRIT, which bloweth *where* it listeth, also bloweth *how* it pleaseth; it is oftentimes a gentle gale, not always a hurricane. When the lofty palm of Zelian puts forth its flower, the sheath bursts with a report which shakes the forest; but thousands of other flowers of equal value open in the morning and no sound is heard; so many souls blossom in mercy, and the world hears neither whirlwind nor tempest." Sometimes, the slumbering sinner is aroused by a faithful sermon; sometimes, by a serious conversation with a friend; sometimes, the heavy and oft-repeated strokes of affliction do their work; sometimes, the influences of the BLESSED SPIRIT are more immediately exerted, to animate, to guide, and to teach.

In the text, St. James refers to the influences which man may use for the benefit of his fellow man in this regard.

There has always been a difference of opinion among the learned, whether the Apostle means the covering of the sins of the *converter*, or of the person *converted*. Which ever is the real import of the text, a strong motive is presented for endeavoring to turn a sinner from the error of his ways.

Dr. Doddridge, who is esteemed a careful and safe



interpreter, combines both views together, and paraphrases the verse: "not only procuring the pardon of those committed by the convert, but also engaging GOD to look with greater indulgence on his own character, and to be less ready to mark severely what he has done amiss."

The Jews considered it as a praise-worthy act to turn one from a wrong course to a right one; and St. James, very likely, had some familiar saying in his mind, when he wrote the text.

It would be something like a *truism* to say, that if a wicked man is persuaded to forsake his evil ways, and to do that which is lawful and right, his past offences shall be blotted out. Does any body doubt this? Has not the Bible assured us so a thousand times? Take, now, the other view of the text, and we see a most weighty and convincing motive why Christians should always be diligent in doing good. They will not only have the satisfaction of saving a brother from destruction, but their zeal for GOD's glory is rewarded by the assurance that they shall be tenderly dealt with themselves.

This was clearly Daniel's idea, when he said, as an incentive to activity and self-devotion: "They that be teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars, forever and ever." [xii: 3].

St. Peter, also, suggests the same motive for well-doing, when he declares, "Charity shall cover a multitude of sins." [1st Pet. iv: 8].\*

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\* See Bp. Heber's Parochial Sermons, i., p. 328.

The promise recorded by St. James is not designed as an encouragement to CHRIST's *ministers* only, but to all the members of HIS great family, the Church. Every child of GOD, no matter how humble his sphere, nor how small his influence, may share in the labor of love, and reap a glorious reward. "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins."

A Christian man or woman may very properly be said to have power to do this for a fellow creature, without robbing the LORD JESUS of one particle of the glory of HIS office, as the SAVIOUR of the lost, and without invading the work and the province of the HOLY SPIRIT. We do not pretend to accomplish such a change or conversion *meritoriously* or *efficiently*; but merely as *agents* and *instruments* in GOD'S hands. "There is no inconsistency between agency and instrumentality. A pen is nothing without a hand to use it. An instrument always supposes and requires an agent. But is the converse of this proposition true? It is so with us; but not with a BEING whose will is efficiency; and who said, let there be light, and there was light. Yet what GOD is not compelled to do from weakness, HE chooses to do from wisdom. He, therefore, works by means. We know of nothing that HE does immediately. HE fans us by the breeze, and warms us by the sun, and refreshes us by sleep, and sustains us by food. And as it is in nature, so it is in grace." [W. Jay's Works, vol. i., p. 60].

The Christians in gay and dissolute Corinth, had

been converted by the power of GOD, but it was through the agency of man. Paul had planted; and Apollos watered. [1st Cor. iii: 6]. And so it has ever been, through the whole history of the Church.

Private Christians, without giving way, in the least degree, to presumption or extravagance; and without trespassing at all upon the office of the ministry, have been most usefully employed, in their respective spheres in life, for the spiritual improvement of those about them. No one can, with a clear conscience, keep "his light hid under a bushel;" nor ask, with a view of throwing off his personal accountability, "Am I my brother's keeper?" If any of us should see a house wrapped in flames, while the inmates slept, all unconscious of their peril, would we be justified in saying, "It is no concern of ours;" and go on our way without giving the alarm? If the wretched family should be burnt to death through our neglect, would not all who heard of it, charge us with unpardonable inhumanity?

Much more, then, are we accountable, in the sight of GOD, if we see our fellow-creatures "erring from the truth," and hastening to destruction, without endeavoring to warn them of their danger, and to point out to them the way of salvation.

Charles Simeon, whose life of zeal and devotion did so much to rekindle the decaying embers of religion in the great University of Cambridge, was once called in haste to the bedside of a dying brother. As he entered the darkened room, the pale, emaciated sufferer stretched out his feeble hand, and said, with a reproachful look, "O, brother, I am dying, and you never

warned me of my danger; the danger of neglecting my soul's salvation!"

The good clergyman was astonished, and answered, "Nay, my brother; you do me injustice. I took every reasonable opportunity of bringing the subject of religion before you, and frequently alluded to it in my letters."

"Yes," said the dying man; "but you never came to me, closed the door, and took me by the coat-collar, like a man in earnest; and told me if I died in my careless, ungodly state, I was lost."

Charles Simeon did not forget the lesson, and I should not have related the circumstance now, had I not hoped that it might prompt some who hear me, to bestir themselves in doing good.

Irreligious people, (whatever they may choose to imagine), are hastening downward to the gloomy portals of eternal death; and this death, be it remembered, is not mere annihilation, as they might hope it to be. The soul can never die, and if it does not enjoy the blessedness of heaven, it must needs endure the miseries of the lost. Now, what purpose in life ought so to fire our ambition, as the thought of saving a soul from the bitter pains of eternal death? If we should devote a whole life-time to that object, and only accomplish the conversion of *one* soul, how richly should we be repaid for our labor! The greatest of all earthly benefactors would have performed no such praise-worthy act as ours. No matter how *small* the prospect of success may be, it is always enough to encourage us to persevere. While it is the privi-

lege of some to benefit *large numbers* of their fellow-creatures by their prayers, their instruction, and their example; St. James, in the text, makes mention of a *single sinner* saved from death by our influence, as a work of which any one might think with satisfaction and gratitude; and it is in the same view of the priceless value of *one* immortal soul, that our SAVIOUR assures us that "There is joy in the presence of the angels of GOD over *one* sinner that repenteth."

All cannot be like St. Paul, to carry the Gospel through vast regions of the earth; all have not the eloquence to command the attention of thousands; all have not the learning which would enable them to translate the Bible into other tongues; but there is not one who hears me who has not influence for good over some erring soul, a child, a servant, a relative, a neighbor, a friend; which influence it is his bounden duty to exert. "A word fitly spoken," says Solomon, "is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." [Prov. xxiv: 11].

It is not *position* that gives us influence for good, it is *character*. When Diogenes had been captured by pirates, and was about to be sold as a slave into Crete, he pointed to a Corinthian, very carefully dressed, saying, in his dry way, "Sell me to that man; he wants a master!" His strange wish was granted him, and the event demonstrated his sagacity. Character overcame position; and the slave bought with money became the real master of the one who purchased him.

And so will the influence of the good be *felt*, no matter what social-rank they hold. A kind, gracious

word, spoken at the right time, and in the proper spirit, may be productive of lasting good. A Christian man had just taken a cool glass of water from the famous fountain at Saratoga, when he said to a lady dipping her tumbler into the healing spring: "Have you ever drank at that Great Fountain?" meaning the Fountain for sin and uncleanness, opened for us, through the atoning sacrifice of the LORD JESUS. She never *had* sought that Fountain, but this simple question led her to it.

And so, all of us, without talking cant, or making ourselves officious and disagreeable, might, day by day, be speaking wholesome words; words which may be effectual to the saving of a soul from death.

Another agency to be employed in the same great work, is the circulation of tracts and books. The good which even *one* book may do, may be shown in the case of the little two-penny tract brought in a peddler's wallet, to the door of Richard Baxter's father, and which was the means of leading the preacher of Kidderminster to the knowledge of the truth. Baxter wrote the "Saint's Rest," which was blessed to the conversion of Doddridge. He wrote "The Rise and Progress," and this book turned the leader of the English Parliament, William Wilberforce, from darkness to light. Wilberforce published his "Practical View," and this made a Christian and clergyman of Leigh Richmond; and he wrote his "Dairyman's Daughter," which has been translated into fifty languages, and has been blessed to the conversion of thousands. Are you doing what you *can*,

and what you *ought*, in circulating good books? If not, it is vain to claim that you are very anxious to see your irreligious friends and neighbors any better than they are.

I have only time to speak of one more method which all may employ for doing good; that of *bringing others with you to Church*. The practiced bee-hunter, in our Western forests, puts a piece of honey-comb in a box, and catches a bee. He then covers the box, and very soon the bee fills himself with the honey, and is allowed to go free. He makes his way swiftly to his home, but as quickly comes back, and never alone. He brings his companions with him, and they, others, in turn, until the box is filled to overflowing. What a lesson to those who have tasted of the good word of God, and who have found it sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb, to invite their acquaintances to come with them to the house of the LORD! What an immense congregation this would be, if Christian people who are listening to me now, would act upon this principle; so plainly a matter of duty! It is vain to pretend that we are really anxious to see others traveling in the right way, so long as we neglect this very important mode of accomplishing it.

If there were no future state, people might go on as carelessly as they pleased, and little harm would come of it. But all of us know that there *is* such a future state; a state of happiness or of misery, according to the deeds done in the body. How earnest, then, should we be, not only in "working out our own salvation," but in seeking to bring others, also,

into the safe and pleasant paths which lead to our FATHER'S house in heaven.

Suppose a person on board a ship, under full headway, should find, on taking the soundings, that she would soon be dashed against the hidden rocks, unless the helm could be turned without delay. Would his fellow-passengers, whose lives were in such imminent peril, be offended if he spoke as if he believed the danger to be real, and was anxious for them all to escape it?

And, so, if you, in kindness and with evident concern for his eternal good, point out to your irreligious friend, the passages in the word of GOD, which remind him what course he is steering, and where it must end, will he not *bless*, rather than *blame* you? And will it not be a reward which angels might envy you, that you have thus saved a brother's soul from eternal death; and that a multitude of sins; sins, the remembrance of which had made you shudder, have been graciously blotted out?



## SERMON XLII.

### THE DRAW NET.

[FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind; which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and set down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire.—ST. MATTHEW xiii. 47–50.

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A VERY short parable, this; but full of important lessons.

Our SAVIOUR's public discourses were calculated to interest, and to profit every class of persons. • The farmer, the shepherd, the mechanic, the fisherman, all had the sublime truths of the Gospel brought down to a level with their several capacities, and illustrated by the peculiarities of their every-day employments. There was no waste of vain words; no shooting over the heads of those whom HE wished to attract and to make better; no attempt at display; not a word, nor look, designed for popular effect. Most of our LORD's parables refer to the different branches of husbandry,

because so large a portion of HIS time was spent among those engaged in agricultural pursuits.

How the imagination of the simple fishermen of Galilee must have kindled, while HE, the GREAT FISHERMAN, who cast the net of the Gospel, even while HE spoke to them under the familiar imagery of the text.

"Nothing in the kingdom of CHRIST is accidental, or the result of caprice, least of all the vital matter of its first teachers and founders. There was, no doubt, an adaptation, a fitness in the occupation of these men to develop just those attributes of character most needed in the Apostolic office. There are various modes of fishing, and each calculated to cultivate and strengthen some particular moral quality of great importance in their mission." [Land and Book, vol. ii., p. 79]. Not to enlarge upon this point, I will only add, that when we call to mind the patience, the caution, the skill, the perseverance, the watchfulness and promptness, which are the characteristics of the successful fisherman, we discover that no one occupation of humble life calls into exercise, and develops so many of the elements necessary for a religious teacher as that of fishing.

"The kingdom of heaven," or Church of GOD, our SAVIOUR tells us in the parable, "is like unto a net."

Various kinds of nets are referred to in the Scriptures. There was the *hand-net*, which was tied to the arm of the fisherman, and so folded that, when thrown into the water, it expanded to its utmost size, and was sunk, by small leaden weights, to the bottom. *Bag*

and *basket-nets* were used to catch the fish in deep water. It was with one of these that Simon Peter had toiled all the night, to no purpose, on the beautiful lake of Genessaret. Although this very portion of the limpid waters had been swept again and again; and the nets came up empty; yet, when at the command of the LORD JESUS, they were once more let down; the same waters swarmed with life, and the finny tenants of the deep owned the presence of HIM who had made the sea. The net was actually broken with the multitude of the fishes enclosed in it; and the little cockle-shell boats began to sink. [St. Luke v: 4-9].

The net spoken of in the text, as a fitting emblem of the Church of GOD, differed much from those just now described. In the heading of the chapter in our English Bible, it is called a *draw* net, and the particular sort is distinctly marked by the word in the original Greek. It was of great length, so large, indeed, that a mighty shoal of fishes could be captured by it at once; and it swept, sometimes, the waters of an entire bay. "On the coast of Cornwall, where it is now used, and bears the same name, *seine* or *sean*, a corruption of the Greek, it is sometimes half a mile in length. It is leaded below, that it may sweep the bottom of the sea, and supported with corks above, and having been carried out so as to enclose a large space of sea, the ends are then brought together, and it is drawn up upon the beach with all that it contains." [Trench's Notes on Parables, p. 110, *note*]. Thus all-embracing in its nature was to be the Church of GOD.

Hitherto, His kingdom had only cast the net into a single stream; but a new era had now begun, and the great draw net was to embrace the broad sea of the whole world, and collect together some out of every kindred, and people, and tongue. In the parable which we are considering, the Church is presented in her missionary capacity. "Christianity alone combines the nations of the world, and converts them; so to speak, into one spiritual ocean. The net itself is, of course, only intended to enclose a draught; not to separate its contents. Accordingly, along with the good fishes, unclean sea animals, bad fishes, mud, etc., are brought to land. This exactly applies to the Church in her missionary capacity." [Lange's Com'y. in loco.]

The kingdom of our blessed LORD, like the great draw net in the parable, is large enough to embrace all; and an opportunity is extended to all to enter it. The Gospel recognizes people of every rank and description, as fallen and perishing, and it contemplates their deliverance. It addresses itself to man as man, and reveals a SAVIOUR to every despairing sinner.

The parable of the draw net suggests, also, that active instrumentalities must be used for the accomplishment of GOD's purposes in the world. The kingdom and Church of CHRIST, like the net in the parable, is to be cast into the sea. The fisherman knows not what success will attend his efforts. He may toil all the night, and take nothing; or he may enclose such a number of fishes that the net can, with difficulty, be drawn to shore. The duty of the Gospel fisherman remains the same.

Few occupations involve more toil, fatigue, and self-denial, than that of the fisherman; and the same holds good of the laborious and ill-requited calling of the minister of the LORD JESUS.

*"The good news man!"* as the converted heathen beautifully called him, he should strive to be like the picture which Christian saw hanging against the wall in the house of the Interpreter; the picture of a grave man, with eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth written upon his lips, the world behind his back; standing as if he pleaded with men; and having a crown of gold suspended over his head.

*"I will make you fishers of men,"* [St. Matt. iv: 19], was the SAVIOUR'S promise to the first Apostles; to cast the net of the kingdom; to fish for precious souls; and to capture mighty draughts. By prudence, by devotion, by perseverance, they were to gain members for their MASTER'S kingdom from the broad sea of an evil world.

"It is now fifteen years," once wrote a faithful English clergyman, (Daracott, of Wilmington), in a little country town, "since I was settled in this place; and though I found religion at a very low ebb, it pleased God, by my poor ministrations, to revive it soon on my first coming, and to continue it, more or less, in a flourishing state, to this day. Every year there have been additions, and in some years, very large, to the Church, of such as I hope will be saved. You would be more astonished, did you know by what a poor, weak, sinful instrument this has been done."

Such is the great work which the fishermen of the LORD JESUS have been carrying on for so many ages, with such marvelous success.

The parable goes on to teach that this Gospel draw net was to *gather of every kind*. The Gospel cannot be preached in vain. The word of the LORD never returns unto HIM void. [Is. lv: 10-11].

Not only will all sorts and conditions of men be brought into the kingdom, but even those who are unfit to appreciate its privileges, or share in its final rewards. Good and bad will both be found in the draw net. *Hypocrites*, like Judas, and Annanias, and Sapphira; *formalists*, who had only a name to live, with no real inner life; *inconsistent, backsliding* professors, who ran well for a season, and then faltered, and fell away; all find their way into the Church.

This mixture of good and bad in the Gospel draw net should occasion no surprise nor anxiety. The kingdom of GOD has presented the same appearance from the beginning, and will continue to do so until the end. It was foreshadowed in *type*, by the clean and unclean beasts which took refuge in Noah's ark; it was taught in the *vision* granted to St. Peter, in the great sheet let down from heaven, wherein were all manner of four-footed creatures and creeping reptiles.

Our SAVIOUR assures us of the same fact, by *comparison*, when HE likened HIS Church to a draw-net, which embraced both good and bad. "We may not separate from the Church, therefore, on pretence of belonging to some holier society within it. This is *schism*. We thereby, in effect, put ourselves *out* of

the Church, and endanger our own salvation. We pretend not to know the secrets of other men's hearts; whereas, a little reflection might convince us that we know not the secrets of our own. The LORD 'searcheth all hearts,' [1st Chron. xxviii: 9]; and 'The LORD knoweth them that are HIS,' [2d Tim. ii: 19]. Let this thought suffice us." [Plain Com'y. on Holy Gospels, vol. i., p. 125].

If the great Gospel draw-net, in its wide sweep, has gathered in both good and bad, that is no concern of ours. Whatever shall become of others, at the last, whom we may count as unworthy members of the Church, this we may be sure of; that if *we* try faithfully to do *our* duty, it will, at least, be well with *us*.

The Church of CHRIST is essentially *missionary* in its character, and must continue, therefore, like the draw-net, to bring in both good and bad. But there is another process yet to come. As fishermen will not encumber themselves with worthless fishes, so GOD will not receive into heaven the vile and the reprobate; even though the Gospel-net has gathered them. And hence, we read in the parable, that as the fishermen, when the net was full, "*drew it to shore, and sat down, gathering the good into vessels, but cast the bad away; so shall it be at the end of the world.*"

The ALMIGHTY *now* employs men to be HIS fishers, collecting all sorts and descriptions in the great *draw-net*; then, angels will be HIS agents, to separate the good from the bad.

HIS ministers may err in judgment; they may be grossly deceived; they may be too lax, or too severe

in the exercise of their office. The angels will make no mistake in their work of discrimination and careful sifting. Not one that is truly good shall be cast away. Not one that is really bad shall be preserved. Every word, in the short parable of the draw net, is worthy of note.

The angels are represented as "*sitting down*," because *sitting* denotes *authority*, [See Daniel vii: 9; Joel iii: 12; Malachi iii: 3]; and as describing, also, the vigilance and care with which they will discharge their office.

They, then, separate the clean from the unclean, gathering the good into "*vessels*;" as there will be "*many mansions*" in our FATHER'S house, [St. John xiv: 2]; and casting the bad away. "An entire freedom from all evil belongs to the idea of the Church, and this idea shall be ultimately realized. Notwithstanding all that mars its purity, and defiles its brightness, we confess our belief in an *holy* Catholic Church; for we believe that whatever we see cleaving to it, which is not holy, is an alien disturbing element, which shall one day be perfectly separated from it." [Trench's Notes, p. 112, etc].

The parable suggests two practical reflections.

1. How diligently we should attend to the ordinances of the Gospel!

The LORD'S ministers are HIS chosen fishermen, and it is the great business of their lives to "catch men." [St. Matt. iv: 19; St. Luke v: 10]. It is in the ordinance of preaching the word, and in the administration of the sacraments, that they cast the Gospel net.



If, then, the privileges of public worship are neglected, there is no probability that the careless and unconcerned will ever be drawn to God.

2. Again, how careful ought we to be not to rest our hopes on an unsound and empty profession! *Counterfeit diamonds* may be gaudy and glistening; but they are actually worthless. *Base money* may pass current for a while, but it is sure of being detected at the last. And so with all shams in religion.

A skilful painter once exhibited a curious picture, in London, representing a friar dressed in the robes of his office; and when viewed at a distance, the holy man appeared to be engaged in prayer; his hands devoutly clasped, and his eyes cast down, like the humble publican in the Gospel. When the observer drew near the canvas, the deception instantly vanished. The prayer-book which seemed to be before the monk, was discovered to be a punch-bowl, into which he was adroitly squeezing a lemon.

How lively a representation of a hypocrite! Let all of us who have been brought into the kingdom of God's dear SON, through the instrumentality of the Gospel draw net, strive after sincerity of heart, and consistency of life. Every one of us is either a vessel of mercy, or a vessel of wrath, fitted to destruction. We cannot judge each other; we cannot judge ourselves. The net has, at present, gathered of every kind. At the end of the world will be the final division. For that careful scrutiny and sifting, let us strive to be ready; judging ourselves honestly and impartially now, that we be not, hereafter, condemned of the LORD.

## SERMON XLIII.

### STEADFASTNESS OF JOB.

[SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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Though HE slay me, yet will I trust in HIM.—JOB xiii. 15.

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A NOBLE sentiment, indeed; and the person who can express it in sincerity of heart, may know of a surety, that he is one of GOD'S dear children.

The declaration made by holy Job, in the text, indicates unswerving confidence in the ALMIGHTY in any emergency which could possibly arise.

When those who once claimed to be our friends become cold towards us in our misfortunes, we cannot help losing confidence in them, and having the warmth of affection thoroughly chilled. Not so, however, in respect to GOD. Such is the nature of our confidence in HIM, that though HE takes away comfort after comfort; though our health is destroyed and our friends are removed, and though we are led down into the valley and the shadow of death, yet still we never lose our confidence in HIM. We feel that all will yet be

well. We look forward to another state, and anticipate the blessedness of a better world.

The admirable sentiment just announced as the text, was the exclamation of Job, in the midst of a multiplicity of trials, such as few have been called to endure.

That the book which bears his name contains a *literal history* of the temptations and sufferings of a real character, cannot be doubted by those who receive the testimony of Holy Scripture. Thus, the Prophet Ezekiel would not have referred to a *fictitious* character, in connection with two real ones, when he says, (while speaking of the influence which good men may exert by their prayers), "Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the LORD GOD." [xiv: 14].

Again, St. James writes, in his Epistle, "Behold, we count them happy which endure; ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the LORD; that the LORD is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." [v: 11].

It would be absurd to suppose that an inspired Apostle would refer to an imaginary character as an example of patience, or a proof of GOD's abundant mercy.

Moreover, the *internal* evidence drawn from the book itself would lead any unbiased mind to the conclusion that Job was a real person. Thus, we have the name, the country, and various circumstances concerning the patriarch, mentioned with careful minuteness. The names, the number, and the acts of his

children are referred to; the conduct of his wife is recorded as a fact; his friends, their names, countries, and conversations are distinctly noted; and all as you observe, pointing to Job as *a real person*. [See Horne's Introduction, ii., p. 228].

I have taken the trouble to establish this point, because much of the comfort to be drawn from his example must depend upon it.

The drama of Job's eventful life opens with the scenery of wealth and magnificence. In the foreground, the patriarch himself appears; a man "perfect and upright, who feared GOD and eschewed evil;" while the background of the picture is crowded with thousands of sheep and camels, and hundreds of yokes of oxen; and those other possessions peculiar to "the greatest of the men of the East." [i: 3]. But, while thus surrounded with the munificent gifts of a gracious PROVIDENCE, Job daily acknowledged his entire dependence upon GOD; and offered the appointed sacrifices for himself and for his children. How striking the contrast between him and the rich man in the parable, whose barns were filled to overflowing by the hand of the same ALMIGHTY FATHER; but who regarded every thing as his own by right.

When, by Divine permission, the Evil One was allowed to test the steadfastness of Job, by stripping him of all his external possessions, the good man at once recognized it as a dispensation of Providence, and "fell down and worshipped." [i: 20]. Aye, he did more. He acknowledged the justice and equality of GOD's dealings. All his accumulations of wealth

had been drawn from the fertile bosom of the earth; and, at his departure from this uncertain and changing world, he must expect to lay down these borrowed glories on the verge of the open grave.

Satan having failed thus far, is permitted to renew the assault, and now afflicts Job with a sore disease. The patriarch sat down amongst the ashes, and while his own wife urges him to curse GOD and die, thus accusing the righteous LORD with inconsistency and unfairness, he returns the submissive answer, "Shall we receive *good* at the hands of GOD, and shall we not receive evil?" [ii: 10].

When Job's friends came to him in the season of his multiplied sorrows, and upbraided him with impiety and hypocrisy, which they plainly insinuated had brought these heavy judgments upon him, he pleaded the innocency of his life, and the uprightness of his intentions. "HE assures himself that whatever might be the design of ALMIGHTY GOD in overwhelming him with such a deluge of calamities, it could not be for the punishment of vice, because he had never lived in it; nor for the correction of evil tempers and passions, because he had never indulged them. Upon the most exact review of his life, he could not find any reason to repent of it, or wish his general conduct had been other than it was. He therefore resolves, that though his sufferings were so exceedingly great as to make him curse the day of his birth, and wish himself out of existence, he would still live and act upon his old principles—patient submission to the will of GOD, and firm trust and confi-

dence in HIM, be the consequence whatever it might. *Though HE slay me, yet will I trust in HIM.*" [Bp. Seabury's Discourses, vol. ii., p. 38].

Here, you observe, that he distinctly professes his *unabated confidence in GOD*. He did not, for a moment, harbor the thought that a BEING, who in years past, had shown him so many tokens of His favor, could now be his enemy.

Job believed, (as all of us should do), that it was a proper and a possible thing that *natural evil* might, by the ordering of a gracious PROVIDENCE, be turned into *moral good*; and that *pains of body* might be made to minister to the *health and happiness of the soul*. As many a valuable life has been saved by the timely amputation of a shattered or gangrened limb; so, in the course of GOD's providence, while no chastening, for the present, is joyous; but, oftentimes, most grievous for flesh and blood to bear; nevertheless, *afterwards*, it is sure to yield the peaceable and blessed fruit of righteousness to them that patiently endure. [Hebrews xii: 11].

The declaration of Job, in the text, suggests, also, that this duty of steadfastness and humble submission under chastisement is no easy thing. "*Though HE slay me, (hard and well-nigh impossible though it seem to be), yet will I trust in HIM.*"

When troubles come upon our friends and neighbors, we go then in their sorrows and do our best to cheer and strengthen them. "We readily deal out the promises to them, and feel inclined to reprove, if they refuse to be comforted. We tell them GOD is

only waiting to be gracious, and that behind a frowning providence, HE hides a smiling face. But when we come into the same condition ourselves, we are unable to follow the advice we have given, and to receive the encouragements we have administered. .

. . . To trust GOD when we know not what HE is doing; when HE seems to oppose us; when HE presents a sword even to our bosom and we feel its point; it is then, verily, no easy thing to hope in the LORD, and wait patiently for HIM. But Job did this. Yea, says he, in the midst of every killing providence, "Though HE slay me, yet will I trust in HIM." [Wm. Jay's Works, i., p. 363].

This is the spirit which all of us, who claim to be Christians, are expected to cultivate.

Job was no better than we are, by nature, and yet, the grace of GOD enabled him to triumph. Nor was his case an *exception* to a *general rule*, since multitudes, in all ages, have done the same.

John Butterworth, an English clergyman, speaking of his own religious experiences, remarks: "One day as I was reading in a book called the 'Marrow of Modern Divinity,' a sentence from Luther was quoted, which was this: 'I would run into the arms of CHRIST, if HE stood with a drawn sword in His hand.' This thought came bolting into my mind, 'so will I too;' and those words of Job occurred, 'Though HE slay me, yet will I trust in HIM.' My burden dropped off; my soul was filled with joy and peace through believing in CHRIST; a *venturesome believing* was the means of setting me at liberty."

A devoted wife who had been so unfortunate as to lose her husband, comforted herself with the reflection that she had two lovely boys left to cheer her. By a severe accident, one of them was soon cut off. This was a heavy trial; but she still found comfort in her remaining son, and fixed her affections more closely upon him. Shortly after, intelligence was brought that her only, her darling child was drowned. It was a stunning blow, and one which nothing but Christian resignation could have enabled her to endure; and yet, with the spirit of patient Job, she meekly said, "I see that GOD is determined to have *all* my heart; and so HE *shall*!"

Some touching lines have lately been published, entitled "A SUFFERER'S HYMN." Their author has sat, now, for several years, in a beautiful home, without sight, and amidst the voices of an accomplished and devoted family, without hearing. No beam of outward light, and no welcome sound, has cheered these dark, silent days and nights, during the slow-moving years. The only communications received from those he loves are conveyed by the tracing of characters on the palm of his hand. Life had brilliant promises for him when he was suddenly so separated and desolated. The lines which I shall quote will show how child-like faith has grown stronger and firmer under the dreary discipline of protracted sorrow.

"O God, may I more thankful be  
For all the blessings thrown on me;  
For home and friends, a precious wife,  
My children, and a conscious life.



Although I cannot see the ray  
That turns the darkness into day,  
I know there is a sun above,  
Effulgent with immortal love.

Although I cannot *hear* the notes  
Of joy that burst from feathered throats,  
I know that loud and tuneful lays  
Are sounding always to Thy praise.

The pleasures of our earthly sense  
Are proofs of God's beneficence;  
But when this transient life is o'er,  
They then can comfort us no more.

The greatest boon that God has given  
Is *time* to fit ourselves for Heaven;  
And let us all this time improve,  
That we may dwell with CHRIST above."

It is not to be supposed that we, my friends, who have had comparatively little experience in such a school of discipline, could exhibit, *now*, these fruits of patience; but the promise is for *us*, as well as for those who *have* learned to endure, "As thy *day*, so shall thy *strength* be." We should, therefore, always make it a part of our supplications, that the good LORD may "give us patience in time of adversity." [Ps. xciv: 13].

It is not likely that we shall be tempted and tried, to the extent that Job was, and yet, as great sorrows have been sent on GOD's people before, so might they be suffered to come upon us. "Although it is a strange and mysterious thing, how some human beings are, as it were, singled out for terrible suffering; how some are doomed to lie for years on beds of agony;

how some are selected as the victims of unendurable wrong; and who can tell but that he or she may yet attain this sorrowful eminence; may yet receive the shock of some fearful accident, or become the prey of some dreadful disease, or the victim of some crushing misfortune? Which of us here can tell how sadly we may need patience before we come to die?" [Graver Thoughts of Country Parson, 2d series, p. 298]. And let us remember, my friends, that, in order to have a stock of this virtue on hand, to help us bear under *greater* trials, we must have learned patience, day by day, in our ever-recurring contact with *smaller* ones.

The petty vexations of domestic and social life; our occasional ailments and accidents; these, and other things akin to them, are, after all, not small trials, and if we get through with them safely and well, we must not only *pray* for the Christian grace of *patience*, but do our best to make it grow within us. We need never be afraid of having too much of it. "Though HE slay me, yet will I trust in HIM," is the waiting, persevering spirit which we are to strive after.

It becomes the Christian, also, to keep in mind, that not a few of his earthly trials are not only merciful corrections, but *judgments* also.

I have left myself no time to expand this idea, beyond a single illustration. An over-indulgent parent is cursed, in after years, with disobedient, graceless children; plainly as a judgment for the previous sinful neglect of them. It is absurd to say that GOD has forgiven all the wrong of this father or mother towards

his children; because any one who beholds the ill-concealed anguish of that parent's heart, knows that GOD is even now punishing for the sin.

Very much that we are disposed to blame the ALMIGHTY for, in our moments of thoughtless petulance, is, after all, the fruit of our own misdoings. *Patience*, therefore, is a bounden duty; and whether we suffer like holy Job, sitting in the ashes of contrition, or with Jeremiah, in the loathsome dungeon, or like the Holy Children in the devouring flames, let us learn to glorify our LORD GOD; to trust in HIM; and to praise and magnify HIM forever.

"I love THY chastenings, O my God,  
They fix my hopes on THY abode;  
Where, in THY presence fully blest.  
THY stricken saints forever rest."—H. 161.

## SERMON XLIV.

### THE OFFENDING MEMBER.

[SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.—ST. MARK ix. 43, 44.

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ARCHBISHOP CRANMER, who had been the head and front of the Reformation in England, was weak and wicked enough to sign a recantation, in order to save his life.

Finding that the Pope's blood-thirsty emissaries were still determined to sacrifice so distinguished a victim, the unhappy man saw his sinfulness in its true light, and bitterly mourned over the act of folly into which he had been so craftily entrapped. The faggots were heaped in an open square in Oxford; and the fire was kindled. The prisoner, stripped of the robes of office, and treated with every mark of contempt, was rudely bound to the stake. With unflinching fortitude, he thrust his right hand into the flames, exclaiming, so long as his parched and swollen tongue could utter

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words, "*This hand hath offended; this unworthy hand!*"

In the verses which follow the text, our SAVIOUR mentions two other members of the body, the *foot* and the *eye*, and gives the same caution against allowing *them* to offend, as HE had done in the case of the *hand*.

The noun from which the verb *offended* is derived, means a *stumbling-block*; any impediment left in the way which may cause us to fall. The *eye* does this when it *looks* with evil desire and lust. The *hand* does it when raised in violence or vengeance. The *foot* does it when treading the downward path of death. Under these three *general* expressions, then, are to be arranged all those things which prove to us occasions of evil.

The duty which our SAVIOUR enforces, in the text, is *the mortification of sin*. The course which HE mentions is the only *safe* and *practicable* one. Self must be subdued; the evil habit must be rooted out; the unlawful gain given up; the idol of the heart must be renounced. "The hand, the foot, the eye, which must be sacrificed, is *that* habit which is the closest; that indulgence which seems to have become a necessity; that feeling which has intertwined itself among the roots of our constant actions. Ours is no heedless adversary. He has employed for the ruin of each age and class, those very instruments which might most powerfully attract, and most firmly retain the victim. Intense is the might of all habit; but when it is fastened to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life, it is not strange if the bond should sometimes seem to defy all effort for emancipation."

[Bp. Burgess' "Sermons on the Christian Life," pp. 170-1.]

*Worldly interest*, or an unwillingness to give up some *darling sin*, is the true cause why multitudes are hindered from becoming members of the Church, and why thousands more, who *have* taken this important step, and entered into covenant with GOD, fail to live the rest of their lives according to that beginning. One, very absurdly fancies, that his business will suffer, unless a portion of Sunday be devoted to it; and this is a *stumbling-block* to *him*. Another makes an idol of money, and seeks after it with the engrossing anxiety which should mark the pursuit of enduring riches. A third is of a social and yielding disposition, and while he has been taught by repeated and mortifying failures to keep his thirst for what are called "intoxicating drinks," within the bounds of moderation, returns to the scenes of his former temptations, to become, again and again, the willing victim of a deadly enemy, whose terrible tyranny no language can possibly describe. A fourth is so over anxious to become rich, that he stretches conscience to the utmost, and *gains* he will have, although every principle of honesty (which can be secretly and safely disregarded), be violated by a course so grasping and dishonorable. Another, whenever he becomes angry and excited, is in the constant habit of giving utterance to oaths and imprecations.

When I add to these examples the case of those who indulge in sensual appetites; who wilfully violate the laws of Christian purity and yield themselves to

the dominion of corrupting habits or lewd imagination, I have reminded you of the chief causes by which the thoughtless and the unwary are led onward to self-destruction.

In all such cases, there is only *one* course to be pursued: the evil habit, whatever it is, must be mastered. Although it be dear to us as an *eye*, or useful, and almost indispensable as a *hand* or *foot*, we must cut it off at once, without pity or reserve.

If the habit has been indulged, even for *one* day, after we have discovered it to be wrong and dangerous, we have only added to the strength of the evil-influence, and made the cure more protracted and painful. Gangrene will spread from a trifling wound, if a tender part be injured, and no seasonable remedy applied. So conscience cannot be safely tampered with by such conduct as I have described.

And, if such a prompt and vigorous course be requisite, in regard to sins into which we may be only *occasionally*, and, as we say, by *accident*, betrayed, how much are we called upon to practice it in the case of those which have become habitual and frequent!

It sometimes happens, that there is a *secret sin*, which keeps its place undisturbed, in the very midst of religious convictions, and gives the fatal offence. The unfortunate person who allows the great enemy to possess a fortress within him, does many *right* things, and holds himself aloof from many *wrong* ones; but, in this single particular, he is satisfied to disregard God's righteous law. O, my friend, if this be *your* condition, I most earnestly counsel you to beware.

Cost what it may, the price must be paid. If but that one point be left, you may push your efforts all around it; and as armies have so often returned from partial conquest, and seen the enemy whom they had heedlessly left behind, gathered again in their strength to meet them in the midst of their own weariness, and to pour upon them a rapid and a dreadful discomfiture; so that one sin may rise upon you hereafter, and drag you down from your fancied security and plunge you into shame and everlasting contempt.

It is the gentle and gracious SAVIOUR who appeals to all who are living in the indulgence of wilful sin, repeating HIS declaration three times, in rapid succession; that the importance of HIS warning may, by no means, be misunderstood: "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into Hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched!"

"Better go maimed and limping to *Heaven*," as Archbishop Leighton strongly expresses it, "than to travel whole and sound to *Hell*." [Works, p. 426].

You observe that our SAVIOUR enforces HIS *advice* by an *argument*. HE assures us that *it is better* to do as HE says. And why *better*? some one may be ready to ask. On the same principle that wise men act in their worldly affairs. They will *toil* and *sow now*, hoping to reap the *harvest* afterwards. *Present loss* is cheerfully endured, for the sake of *future gain*. A *limb* has often been patiently *given up*, that *life* might be *saved*.

And so our blessed LORD would have us find out



our *besetting, deadly sins*, and overcome them before they work our *ruin*. Painful, therefore, though this be, is it not *better*?

You cannot help acknowledging this, because we all know, that to refuse to follow HIS advice, we must suffer consequences far worse. Do you ask what these consequences are? Our SAVIOUR tells us in the text. HE mentions two. The *first* consequence of refusing to lop off our darling sin is this: *that we shall be shut out of Heaven*.

Our gracious MASTER, who never *threatens* when words of kindness will suffice, declares that this mortification of sin is *indispensable to our salvation*. "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands," to lose that final blessedness.

The other consequence of neglecting to give heed to HIS warning is also a very terrible one: *the being cast into Hell*. The Scriptures speak of no *other* place to which it is possible for us to go: it must either be to *Heaven* or to *Hell*. And thrice does our SAVIOUR repeat the terrible words, that the *fire, in the place of torment, never will be quenched*. The human heart, which would delude itself, is so slow and reluctant to receive the doctrine of eternal punishment, that HE who came to save us from it, expresses HIMSELF concerning it in language which cannot be explained away. It is worse than vain, my friends, for any to be deceiving themselves in this matter. "Easy, indeed, it is to throw ridicule on the imagery employed by the SPIRIT to denote endless suffering, the gnawing worm, the flame and brimstone of the fiery lake.

It is easy to speak words of unbelief on this subject; but it is quite impossible to prove, even that the language of Scripture is figurative; much less to prove that the doctrine contained in that language is not to be literally understood." [Plain Com'y. on Holy Gospels, vol. i., p. 349]. "The fire that *never* shall be quenched," says our LORD; "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." By the expression, the "worm that dieth not," is to be understood the pain arising from within, in the person condemned, in contradistinction from the "fire," or pain produced from without. "The *worm* that feeds on our bodily remains, is bred within the body it infests; and the 'worm' of perdition we account the self-torture of remorse and bitter passions; hence, it is called '*their* worm,' *their own* torment, originating in the unhallowed workings of the abandoned soul. We all have a pang and dismay in every consciousness of sin; even the profligate smarts often, and is aghast under the lash of his own heart, though without one holy disposition to correct its depravity. The inference is natural and unavoidable, that such will be the perpetual anguish of the lost." [Bp. H. U. Onderdonk's Tract on Eternal Punishment, p. 14].

Such will be the consequences of disobeying the SAVIOUR'S command, in the text; *to be shut out of Heaven, and to suffer, in that doleful region, where there is no light, nor hope; but only the blackness of darkness forever.*

Even granting, then, that it is a hard thing to subdue our evil appetites, and that to mortify sin *will*

cost us trouble, and loss, and pain; yet, the loss of the joys of Heaven will be far greater, and the pains of Hell, immeasurably worse.

Every one of us, my friends, has *his* besetting sin, and this is the *offending hand* which he must resolutely *cut off*. The natural world furnishes us with illustrations of the importance of this. Almost every tree has its *tap-root*, which goes down as straight into the earth as the trunk rises into the air; and until that root is cut, the tree will stand, and grow, no matter how the side fibres and roots be injured. And, so, besetting sin is often the tap-root of the tree of sin, which bears fruit unto death. One sin, unmortified, may destroy the soul.

Let each one of us, begin this day, and look into his own heart and life; his employment, and his circumstances; and see whether there be not some *offending hand* which we are required to *cut off*. Is there any evil passion which you are in the habit of indulging, whether pride, or anger, or lust, or malice, or covetousness? Is there any sinful practice to which you have been addicted, either drunkenness, or dishonesty, or falsehood, or evil speaking? Is there some branch of your business, which, though profitable, is forbidden by the law of God? Have you made friendships and connections, which, though in a worldly view advantageous, in a spiritual view are hurtful, and prove a constant snare to your soul? All these are cases included in the text. Cut off the hand. Deny that evil passion. Renounce that sinful practice. Give up that unlawful calling. Withdraw from those unions, friend-

ships, and connections. There is no help for it, if you would be safe. You sometimes wonder that your advancement in holiness is so slow, and discouraging. It is your *offending hand*, which is keeping you back. Your unsubdued, besetting sin, like an under-current in the ocean, is carrying you farther and farther away from the only harbor of safety, and of peace.

A sailor once noted, in his checkered experience, that sailing from Cuba, they thought that a good day's sail had borne them sixty miles on their voyage, when the next observation showed that they had really *lost* more than thirty! The fact was easily explained: the ship had been going forward by the *wind*, but had been drifted back by the *current*. And so the course of many may *seem* to be *right*; but the under-current of besetting sin is driving them in the very *opposite* direction.

I beseech you, my friends, to awake to a sense of your danger, while time is left in which you may repent and amend.

Two reflections, and I have done.

1. If our Blessed SAVIOUR really means what HE says, in the text, (and who can doubt that HE *does* mean it), in what a lamentable state must those thoughtless people be, who are living unmindful of their obligations to serve GOD! Shall they who retain only *one* bosom lust be in danger of eternal wretchedness, can those hope to escape, who live in the open and wilful commission of many sins? Have they no cause to dread the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched?

2. The other inference from the subject is, what need have all who profess and call themselves Christians, to watch over their own souls? It is no easy thing to know whether or not we are freed from the degrading bondage of our besetting sins. The father of lies will furnish us with many pleas to urge in extenuation of its guilt, and many specious names whereby to conceal its malignity. Let all, then, who name the name of CHRIST, be jealous of themselves. And let us remember, for our comfort, that there is a powerful friend who is ready to help us, even the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, and if we will look to HIM for strength, we shall be enabled to "mortify the deeds of the body," [Rom. viii. 13]; to "crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin." [Baptismal service].

## SERMON XLV.

### THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

[EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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A *l* manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the HOLY GHOST shall not be forgiven unto men.—*ST. MATTHEW* xii. 31.

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No one who has ever read in Borrow's "Lavengro," his graphic account of the good Welsh Quaker who was made miserable, for years, by the soul-harrowing apprehension that he had committed the unpardonable sin against the HOLY GHOST, will be likely to forget it. I am only sorry that I have not time to relate it, for the benefit of those who are unacquainted with it. [Lavengro, pp. 394, etc].

Well-meaning people are, every now and then to be met with, who are suffering almost a living death by reason of morbid forebodings that they have been guilty of the sin for which no pardon can be expected. Instead of *adding* to the fears and anxieties of any one, I am sure that a careful unfolding of the text, will rather have the effect to comfort and encourage.

May the HOLY SPIRIT grant that such may be the fruit of the words now to be preached!

The solemn statement made in the text, was not recorded, (the author of the "Plain Commentary on the Holy Gospels" has very properly remarked), "that weak believers should perplex and torture themselves with it; neither is it one which any may presume to overlook." [vol. i, p 114.] "What then is the nature of that unpardonable offence, concerning which our LORD says such awful things? It is clearly much more than wilful sin. It seems rather to be the terrible act of one like Judas, who, in defiance of light and knowledge, rejects of set purpose; opposes, after due deliberation, the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT." [p 289].

A reference to the circumstances attending the delivery of the text, will help to throw light upon it. Our SAVIOUR addressed these terrible words to the Pharisees. He had just performed a wonderful miracle; that of casting out a demon from the dumb and blind man at Capernaum. It was so signal a proof of HIS Divine mission, that the astonished beholders asked; "Is not this the Son of David?" This question aroused the jealousy of the Pharisees, and as the fact that the poor sufferer had been cured was beyond dispute, some plausible explanation must be devised. The unprincipled bigots accordingly ventured to declare that the healing had been accomplished through the aid of the Prince of the Devils. This ascription of the SAVIOUR'S miracles to satanic agency, marks a decided progress in the hostility of the Pharisees to the truth. Thus far, they had only

presumed to say of JESUS that HE was a Sabbath-breaker, and a blasphemer; but, now, they go on to add to their wickedness, the bold and unblushing assertion that HE was actually in league with evil spirits. This charge amounted to the ascribing to a diabolical origin all that HE said and did, thus making the SPIRIT of GOD which rested upon HIM to be the spirit of Beelzebub. No wonder the severity of HIS language in reply to such a charge. And, yet, while vindicating HIS Divine character and claims, the patient and forgiving SAVIOUR, instead of delivering over these miserable men, (as HE might most justly have done), to judicial blindness and impenitence, condescended to reason with them on the subject, and then kindly cautioned them against indulging so base a spirit. He assured them that all which they had done against HIM, might be forgiven; but that if they should persist in this conduct, toward the HOLY SPIRIT also, and reject HIS testimony, they would cut themselves off from all possibility of obtaining mercy. [See Lange's Comment'y, vol. i, p. 224]. The sin against the HOLY GHOST was the resisting of the evidences of Christianity, so as coolly and deliberately to pour contempt upon the sacred truths which it was the office of the BLESSED SPIRIT to reveal; and, the ascribing HIS miraculous powers, and merciful influences, to the agency of Satan.

Do you ask why this particular sin is made an exception to the full and free pardon which our gracious FATHER offers for all other offences? I answer, that the sin itself, in the very nature of things, leaves one



helpless and hopeless. GOD has only provided *one* method of salvation for us, and that is through the precious death and sacrifice of HIS dear SON, and the influences of the HOLY SPIRIT. If, therefore, a man chooses to despise this salvation, and to show contempt for this plan, he must needs perish; because he has wilfully and wickedly rejected the only means of life.

As one who has swallowed a draught of deadly poison, may escape from death by taking, in season, the proper antidote, so may the person who has been guilty of the most grievous sins, find pardon and salvation, if he will come to the LORD JESUS, with a true penitent heart, and lively faith in the ways of HIS appointment; but, if these reasonable conditions be refused, there is an end of hope.

We are not to suppose, that *every* rejection of the Gospel is unpardonable; because this might have grown out of an ignorance of its true nature; and, an ignorance for which the man was by no means accountable. The rejection of the claims of the religion of CHRIST becomes unpardonable, when it is wilful and deliberate, against the convictions of conscience, and the dictates of an enlightened judgment. The mind has then been given over to its own delusions, and sealed up under final impenitence. Sin, under such circumstances, cannot be forgiven, because it will never be duly repented of.

The mercy of GOD is almost without limit. The hand of the murderer, red with the blood of his victim, may be washed clean in that fountain which the LORD JESUS opened on Calvary.

Besides his impious idolatries, Manasseh, we are told, had "filled the streets of Jerusalem with the blood of innocents," [2d Kings, 21-16; 2d Chron. 33-9-12-13], and yet, he was pardoned.

The very murder of GOD's own SON has been forgiven, in the case of hundreds and thousands of the children of Abraham, who have repented of their sins, and who have shared in the benefit of the gracious SAVIOUR's prayer, "FATHER, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

The Christians of Corinth had been guilty of sins which should cause humanity to blush; and yet, they were washed, justified, and sanctified, in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD. [1st Cor. vi: 9-11].

Not only does the Bible abound with *examples*, showing how ready the good LORD is to pardon the offences of all who truly turn to him; but transgressors are encouraged to come to the mercy-seat, by the most abundant promises. "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." [Is. i: 18].

Under the laws of Moses, there were some sins, for which no sacrifice was provided; but there is no form of iniquity from which we may not be delivered by the Gospel of CHRIST. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren," said St. Paul, in his famous sermon in the synagogue, at Antioch; "that through this MAN is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by HIM all that believe are justified from all things, from

which ye could not be justified by the laws of Moses." [Acts, xiii: 38-39].

Our SAVIOUR'S own promise is as broad, and as comprehensive, as any could possibly desire: "Him that cometh to ME, I will in no wise cast out." [St. John vi; 37]. There is only one exception to the universal rule; the sin against the HOLY GHOST. And, in reference to this unpardonable sin, there is nothing mysterious; nothing which it is not easy enough to understand. "It is by a movement of conscience within him, that the man is made sensible of sin; that he is visited with the desire of reformation; that he is given to feel his need both of mercy and pardon; and of grace to help him. But this movement is a suggestion of the SPIRIT of GOD, and if it be resisted by any man, the SPIRIT is resisted. The GOD who offers to draw him unto CHRIST is resisted. The man refuses to believe, because his deeds are evil; and, by every day of perseverance in these deeds, the voice which tells him of their guilt, and urges him to abandon them, is resisted; and thus, the SPIRIT ceases to suggest, and the FATHER, from whom the SPIRIT proceedeth, ceases to draw; and the inward voice ceases to remonstrate; and all this, because their authority has been so often put forth, and so often turned from. This is the deadly offence which has reared an impassable wall against the return of the obstinately impenitent. This is the blasphemy to which no forgiveness can be granted, because, in its very nature, the man who has come this length, feels no movement of conscience towards that ground on which alone

forgiveness can be awarded to him, and where it is never refused even to the very worst and most malignant of human iniquities. This is the sin against the HOLY GHOST." [Chalmer's Sermons, vol. ii, p. 333]. Do you ask yourself, my hearer, in trembling anxiety, whether, or not, you have committed this terrible sin? I answer, for your comfort and encouragement, that *you most assuredly have not.*

Your attendance, to-day, in the courts of the LORD; your respectful attention to the preached word; aye, the very apprehension you feel, lest you *may* have been guilty of the unpardonable sin, are evidences enough, that frail, and faulty as you are, in this particular you need cherish no unnecessary fears. In looking about for those who have committed the awful sin against the HOLY GHOST, we ought not to fix our eyes on those whose hearts are yet tender; whose consciences are awake and active; and who are sincerely anxious to please GOD; but rather should we single out the wreckless and the profligate; the scoffer and the scorner; the Sabbath-breaker and the profane; who have turned their backs on the means of grace; and hardened their hearts against the offers of GOD's goodness; and with dogged, and determined step are moving downwards to the realms of eternal darkness.

Be of good courage, my despairing hearer. If it be true that the commission of the sin against the HOLY GHOST is always attended with judicial blindness, and is followed by final impenitence, *you*, most assuredly, have not reached *that* point. Had this been so, instead of dreading lest you *might* have been

guilty of this sin; you would be glorying in your shame, and hardening yourself in your iniquities. Let all such gloomy apprehensions be put away, and let the *encouragements* of GOD's word be ever present before you. "O Israël, trust in the LORD; for with the LORD there is mercy, and with HIM is plenteous redemption. And HE shall redeem Israel from all his sins." [Ps. cxxx: 7-8].

Trifle not with the warnings and wooings of GOD's HOLY SPIRIT. Let HIM guide you into the way of truth; and seek for HIS grace and strength in prayer, and in all other appointed means. "As the worst traveling is when the road is frozen after a thaw, so those are frequently the most hardened, who have had some convictions; who have had some knowledge of the Gospel, and some religious affection, and have then relapsed into their natural hard-heartedness."

We sometimes sing solemn words without feeling much what we say. There is one *hymn* which it would be well for all of us to adopt as a *prayer*.

"Stay, THOU insulted SPIRIT, stay,  
Though I have done THEE such despite;  
Nor cast the sinner quite away,  
Nor take THINE everlasting flight!"

## SERMON XLVI.

### THUNDER AND RAIN IN HARVEST.

[NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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Is it not wheat-harvest to-day? I will call unto the Lord, and He shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which ye have done in the sight of the LORD.—1 Samuel xii. 17.

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Of all the characters portrayed in the Bible, Samuel is one of the most faultless.

The first-born child, after years of earnest entreaty, he was the object of his mother's tender love; but her promise in regard to him was fully kept. She carried him to the LORD'S House, in his early childhood, and the still chamber of the Sanctuary became his home. Cut off from all those influences and longings, so precious to the youthful heart, he passed his time in the loneliness of that sacred place; visited in the night-season by the ALMIGHTY ONE, and made the bearer of mournful tidings to old Eli, the priest. When the fickle and foolish people ask for a king, Samuel knew how contrary it was to GOD'S will, and his prophetic lips foretell the miseries that should follow.

Samuel was bidden to select a ruler for them; Saul was chosen, and visited the seer in his house. The intercourse between them afterwards, was peculiar. When Saul was told to destroy Amalek, but was guilty of positive disobedience in this particular, there is a grandeur in the scene which takes place between king and prophet, which approaches nearly to the sublime. Samuel has spent a whole night in prayer, grieved at the strange perverseness of Saul; and beseeching God's merciful pardon for him. After that painful vigil, he went forth strong and courageous, to face the royal procession, and to deliver with unflattering tongue, God's message to the disobedient king. But I have no time to dwell on particular incidents in Samuel's life. Suffice it to say, that he was lacking in worldly wisdom, as those are apt to be, who are much withdrawn from intercourse with men, and he seemed to have little sympathy with such as were brought into contact with him. Not that he did not cherish proper feelings for his fellow-creatures, but his prophetic office required him to be much with God in meditation and prayer; and hence, he had the bearing of one who was lifted above this world. Samuel may appear, now and then, to have been more severe than was necessary; but it will always be found, on looking at the attending circumstances with care, that he would have been guilty of wrong, had he done otherwise. We have all sometimes felt how much more easy and agreeable it is to pass by an offence, in a quiet way, than to administer the deserved rebuke; and, therefore, we should be ready to give Samuel credit for discharging an unpleasant duty.

These explanations will prepare you to enter into the spirit of the narrative connected with the text.

Saul had been made king of Israel; sacrifices had been offered, and there were great rejoicings among the people. Samuel, now grown old in service, stands up before them all, to vindicate his conduct from even the shadow of suspicion; and no one can listen to his spirited defence, without forming a most favorable opinion of him. Happy is that ruler, or magistrate, or judge; happy the man in any public station; who, after years of exposure to the temptations incident to such positions, can boldly say, "Behold, here am I: witness against me before the Lord. Whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you." [1st Samuel xii: 3]. Happy the man who, in retiring from public service, can hear such acknowledgments of universal respect and confidence, as Samuel did. [v. 4]. The aged prophet reminded the Israelites of all that they had suffered, in years gone by, whenever they had forgotten God's law, and he threatened them with still more grievous trouble in future, in case they should again prove disobedient. And then, in order to show how greatly the ALMIGHTY had been displeased at their so foolishly insisting on the appointment of a king, and at the same time to afford them convincing evidence of his own influence with God, he proposed to work a marvel before their eyes, concerning which there could be no possible mistake. "Is it not wheat-harvest to-day? I will call unto the LORD, and HE shall send



thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king." The rainy seasons of Judea were the spring and autumn; the one called the *former*, the other, the *latter* rain. The harvest began about the first of July, during which time thunder and rain were unknown. Indeed, a thunder-storm in harvest, would be regarded as a visible and miraculous proof of GOD's displeasure. It was such a proof which Samuel now proposed to give. The issue of the event is described in a single verse. "So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel," [1st Sam. xii. 18].

We become so much accustomed to the regular and harmonious working of the complicated machinery of nature, that too many grow unmindful of HIM who arranged all things in the beginning, and who alone sends rain upon the thirsty earth, and whose unerring wisdom directs the changes of the seasons. "If things ordinarily occur in a settled course, we speedily forget that this course is, after all, but the law which GOD is pleased to prescribe to HIMSELF, to be followed only while it shall seem good to HIS infinite wisdom, and swerved from whensoever HE shall think fit to suspend HIS own laws. Men seem practically to have but little remembrance, that the mainspring of all the mechanism is in the hands of an invisible CREATOR; that it is not from what goes on in the hidden laboratories of what they call nature, that season succeeds season, and shower and sunshine alternate with so much of beautiful

and beneficent order, but that the whole arrangement is momentarily dependent on the will and energy of that SUPREME BEING, who 'sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers.' It is needful, we might almost say, that GOD should occasionally interrupt the ordinary course of things; that HE should suspend the laws which HE has been pleased to impress on the natural world, if only that HE may keep HIMSELF from being forgotten." [Melvill's Sermons, ii., p. 100].

Alas! for the secret leaven of unbelief which lurks in the hearts of men! I have heard the question asked again and again, by those who would be shocked to be thought *infidels*, "Do you suppose, for a moment, that GOD would, in answer to prayers, however earnest and importunate, change for a while, and to accomplish some special purpose, *the regular laws of nature?*" Most assuredly I do. It would come to a fine pass, indeed, if HE, who *made* these laws, *could not change* them when HE pleased, and *would not do it*, in order that the wicked might be warned or punished, and the good comforted and relieved.

Would our HEAVENLY FATHER *encourage*, and even *command* us, to ask for worldly blessings, and worldly deliverances, if HE had no intention of granting our petitions? Would HE assure us in so many ways, that HE "careth for us;" that the faithful prayers of HIS people shall avail even to change the seasons, and to make them either barren or fruitful, if HIS purpose were to leave us to suffer and perish for want of HIS timely interference?

Samuel, (who was a man subject to like passions and infirmities as we are), prayed to the LORD, and although it was contrary to the usual course of nature, and a thing altogether without precedent, the mutterings of the thunder were heard, and rain fell upon the ripening harvest fields of Judea. The same GOD still controls the machinery of the universe, and prayer is equally prevailing with him. To lower our ideas of DIVINE PROVIDENCE, until they can be expressed in this cold and cast-iron formula, that it is only the prescience that foresaw, and the preordaining power that, in the beginning, provided for every future contingency, by a system of unvarying laws, is not only an attempt to rob the ALMIGHTY ONE of some of HIS attributes, but is also depriving ourselves of a solid ground of comfort. "Is such the view which meets the deep and irrepressible yearnings and convictions of the human soul? Is it only to an inflexible Law-maker that the soul cries for relief from the depths of its distress? Its instinctive resort, when awful danger threatens, to a POWER above nature; its appeal when struggling with fierce temptation, or with overpowering appetite for spiritual success to some BEING that can act directly on the intellect, the affections, and the will; its unshaken faith when all things seem to be against it; that though the sea roar, and the waves are lifted up, there is ONE, a FATHER, sitting on high, who is mightier, and who doeth all things well; these sentiments, so instinctive and ineffaceable, not learned from Scripture, but felt wherever the human heart throbs with life and emotion; were they given for naught? Do they point to no cor-

responding reality? or is HE to whom they point, ONE who operates on man only through fixed laws and properties, which HE never modifies, never overrules, never disturbs?" [Bp. Alonzo Potter, in Philadelphia. Lectures on Evidences, p. 142]. Such a train of reasoning, without reference to the plain teachings of the Bible, would lead very naturally to the conclusion, that the MOST HIGH is ready to hearken to the supplications of HIS people, in every time of need. The prayers of good men are just as prevailing with HIM now, as were those of Samuel in days of old. If the desired response does not come, there are only two reasons which will explain it; either our faith is weak and worthless, or our HEAVENLY FATHER sees that the granting of our wishes would not be best for us. I have left myself but a briefspace in which to remind you of the sequel of the history. When in answer to the prayers of the prophet, "the LORD sent thunder and rain," at so unusual a season, in token of HIS displeasure, the people were overwhelmed with dread, and besought Samuel to intercede in their behalf.

Instead of showing the least resentment for their ungrateful conduct towards himself, he assured them that they should always have an interest in his supplications, and concluded by reminding them of the only method of being truly safe and happy. "I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the LORD, and serve HIM in truth, with all your heart; for consider how great things HE hath done for you."

Some thoughtless persons are trying to flatter themselves that the practice of religion is all very well, but

not *absolutely necessary*; and, hence, while wives, and children, and friends, and neighbors, are serving GOD, in the ways of HIS appointment, they have made up their minds that their own case may safely be an exception, and that a neglect of these duties on their part will be overlooked. If I am speaking to any such persons, to-day, let me tell you, with all frankness, my hearers, that you are laboring under a fearful delusion.

There is a most absurd impression that great people always go to a good place when they die. Indeed, the ignorant sailor expressed the common belief on the subject, who, being asked, whether Lord Nelson was in Heaven, promptly answered, "Of course; if so be he wished to be there, I should like to know who would keep him out!"

Religion is the one thing needful; and, to "fear the LORD," and "to serve HIM in truth, with all our hearts," is required of all of us. And do not HIS varied and multiplied blessings teach us, that we ought to be doing something in return? Must HE send "thunder and rain;" chastisements for wrongdoing, because men *try to* forget that the ALMIGHTY governs HIS own world, and that HE is jealous of HIS honor?

Rather, my friends, let us all meekly submit ourselves to HIM; acknowledging HIS authority, and striving to obey HIS commandments, that HE may be with us, as HE was with our fathers.

## SERMON XLVII.

### CHRISTIANS WITNESSES FOR JESUS.

[TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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Ye shall be witnesses unto ME.—ACTS i. *part of 8th verse.*

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A CHRISTIAN missionary who had long labored in India without success, was cheered at last, by the conversion of a young Bramin. The sincerity of the new recruit was put to the test in various ways, and his patience sorely tried. A prominent Hindoo said, while gazing at him with his cold, skeptical eyes, "Do you really believe the Christian religion from your heart?"

"Most assuredly," was the answer.

"Well," continued the Hindoo, "we are watching. You are making an experiment. If you live a holy life, we shall know that this Gospel is true which the Padre has been teaching for several years. We have our doubts; but if you bear good fruit, many will follow your example."

And so we say, this day, to those who have recently devoted themselves to GOD's service in confirmation. You have done well, and you have taken a step for which you will never be sorry. The condition which you occupy to-day is infinitely to be preferred to that of the timid and irresolute, who resisted the SAVIOUR's gracious invitation to come unto HIM, and held back from duty. Whatever is right for any one to do, is as proper for you as for them. The only difference is this; by entering into a solemn covenant with GOD, *you* have the promise of HIS gracious and ready help; while those who refused to confess the LORD JESUS before men, are left to get on as best they can.

That our HEAVENLY FATHER will fulfill HIS part of the contract, there can be no possible doubt. It is for us to remember to try to keep ours. In order to do this with any degree of consistency, we must never forget that we are expected to be "*witnesses*" for JESUS.

When our DIVINE REDEEMER, at the time of HIS Ascension, said to HIS disciples, "*Ye shall be witnesses unto ME,*" HE pronounced the words of a moral law, which has always been binding upon the consciences of HIS faithful people. Not only were *the twelve apostles* to be "*witnesses,*" but *every individual Christian* is expected to bear his part in testifying to the truth.

The word translated "*witnesses,*" in the text, is in the original Greek, *martyrs*, because in the early days of the Church, those who bore witness to the life, instructions, death, and resurrection of the SON of GOD, sealed their testimony, in many cases, with their blood. We live in days of less peril of sword and

flame, but the spirit of martyrs will always be required of the true servants of CHRIST. The SAVIOUR is saying to all of us, who have been called by His name, "*Ye shall be witnesses unto ME.*"

I shall enumerate several particulars in which we are expected to discharge this office. Our private devotions, and our secret communings with GOD, are not for the eyes of the world; and hence, need not be referred to in this connection.

1. *The witness for JESUS will be a regular and devout attendant upon public worship, unless hindered by sickness or other bodily infirmities.*

The Countess of Burford had to ride more than sixteen miles on horse-back to discharge this imperative duty; and yet, neither frost, snow, rain, nor bad roads, was sufficient to keep her at home, or prevent her from being at Church in good season. Our religion is *social*, and the spark of holiness is kept alive by joining with others in the public worship of ALMIGHTY GOD. Hence the Apostles' exhortation to Christians "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together," [Heb. x: 25], for this sacred purpose.

2. *The witness for JESUS will show his reverence for his DIVINE LORD by joining heartily in the worship; by kneeling humbly on his knees; and by all other tokens of respect, which the custom of ages has made a part of Christian duty.*

Whenever the spirit of reverence has gained a place in our hearts, it will be manifest in our outward acts.

The devout Christian who hears the *rubric* written in GOD's own book, sounding in his ears, "*O come, let*



*us worship, and bow down, and kneel before the LORD our MAKER,*" [Ps. 95: 6]: "*At the name of JESUS, every knee should bow,*" [Philip ii: 10], will be ashamed to deny to the KING of KINGS these tokens of homage.

Bishop Meade, in his "Old Families and Churches of Virginia," [vol. ii., p. 221], gives a broad hint to many with stiff backs and stubborn knees, when he relates of Chief Justice Marshall, "I can never forget how he would prostrate himself before the rude low benches, without backs, at Coolspring Meeting-house, in the midst of his children, grand-children, and his old neighbors. In Richmond, he always set an example to the gentlemen, of the same conformity."

3. Again. *The zealous witness for JESUS, will not, without unavoidable necessity, be a half-day worshipper.*

The old, the sick, and those who live a long distance from Church, are, of course, not included in such a rule. Indeed, if *all* Christians were as zealous and devoted as *some* Christians are, the courts of the LORD would always be crowded with worshippers. On the other hand, if all were as lukewarm and indifferent as some are, our Churches need very seldom be opened.

Where there is a *will*, there will always be a *way*; and even ladies, who have no one to escort them, can readily arrange to go with their neighbors to Church, for the night service, if they feel much desire to do so. The same persons who never attend at night, would find a plausible excuse for neglecting it in the afternoon. Most inconsistent and unprofitable witnesses for JESUS! It is impossible that the full benefit of the LORD's day should be reaped, unless the two

services be attended; the morning and evening sacrifice appointed by the LORD of the Sabbath.

4. *Another mark which will distinguish a true witness for JESUS is, that he will not be a fair-weather Christian.*

Did you ever know of a Sunday so inclement, that you thought, even for a moment, that the clergyman, or the members of the choir would be absent? If, then, they *can*, and *always do* attend service; and that too, without serious injury to health, does it not show that others might safely venture?

When American women have learned to wear thick shoes, and warm clothing, in bad weather, our Churches will seldom complain of empty pews, and people will live longer, and happier lives. Time was, when the worship of the Sun, under the name of Baal, was nearly universal in Asia, and it is a serious question whether he has not too many worshippers among us!

5. *Every true witness for JESUS, who occupies the responsible position of the head of a household, will celebrate family worship, night and morning.*

In the Christian home, the father rises up to the dignity of his place, as a priest in his own house, and by thus calling his children and servants together, he secures a blessing from above, upon all within his influence and control. Who can tell how soon a jealous GOD will visit the habitations of those who are living unmindful of this plain duty, and "pour out HIS indignation upon the families which have not called upon HIS name?"

It is related of Adam Clarke, that when a mere youth, as neither his father nor mother would celebrate

family worship, he took up this heavy cross, and, in spite of great natural diffidence, continued it as long as he remained under their roof. May other religious sons and daughters do likewise.

“Around each pure domestic shrine,  
Bright flowers of Eden bloom and twine;  
Our hearths are altars all;  
The prayers of hungry Saints and poor,  
Like armed angels at the door,  
Our unseen foes appall.”

6. When the fathers of families take their seats at the table to-day, *if they are really disposed to be witnesses for JESUS, they will say grace before meat.*

Shall benighted Pagans pour out libations to their idol vanities, as a preparation for their meals; shall the poor Mahommedan turn his face towards Mecca, and ask for a grateful heart, in the reception of his frugal fare, and the head of a Christian household neglect so clear a duty? In 1823, the king of the Friendly Islands went on board an English ship, in the harbor, and was invited to dine with the captain. When food was placed before him, he sat so long without touching it, that an officer asked, in surprise, why he did not begin. He answered, in his simplicity, that he was waiting for the blessing! May the image of this dusky islander rise up before every Christian father, who shall venture to eat, this day, without first witnessing for JESUS, by saying grace.

7. I have but a moment left for the briefest reference to two other modes of usefulness, which the zealous witness for CHRIST will be glad to employ for

his MASTER'S glory. Some can be of great service as Sunday School Teachers, and to such is the cheering promise made, "Those that be teachers shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." [Daniel xii: 3].

The sick, the aged, and the infirm, can accomplish much good by the circulation of books and tracts, and when this is judiciously done, the right *book* being given to the right *person*, and at the right *time*, and that with prayers for GOD'S blessing, there is no estimating the benefits which will follow. A witness for JESUS will never be deterred from such praiseworthy efforts, by the dread of provoking ridicule, or of being accused of temporary insanity.

And thus, my friends, I have suggested some of the ways by which you may promote GOD'S glory, and keep your solemn word to serve and please HIM in newness of life. May all of us be ambitious so to live, that the LORD JESUS may say of each one of us, at last, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your LORD!"

## SERMON XLVIII.

### BALM IN GILEAD.

[ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the health of My people recovered?—JEREMIAH viii. 22.

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GILEAD is a mountainous region east of the Jordan, distinguished for its rich pastures, [Num. xxii: 1], and aromatic simples.

Although the name is sometimes applied to the whole country between this river and Arabia, strictly speaking, it is a district quite limited in extent. This region was celebrated for a fragrant balsam, mentioned in the Scriptures as the "Balm of Gilead." It is the juice of a small, stunted shrub, and is extremely costly. When Alexander the Great pushed his conquests to the East, a spoonful of the balsam was all which could be collected during a long summer's day, and "it was consequently so dear that it sold for double its weight in silver." [Calmet, p. 141]. The "Balm of Gilead" is held in the highest esteem, even to this day, among

Oriental nations, both "as a cosmetic, and as a medicine for the cure of external wounds." [Horne's Intro., ii: 36]. The use of the expression, "Balm of Gilead," in the text, is metaphorical. While speaking of the sufferings brought upon the Holy City, by the sinfulness of GOD'S chosen people, the Prophet Jeremiah exclaims, in view of their deplorable wretchedness, "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why, then, is not the daughter of MY people recovered?" In other words, "Is there no salutary means within reach, or no persons skilful enough to apply them, to relieve my devoted country from the miseries which have come upon it?"

The health of body and soul are most essential for our comfort and happiness. Both, however, may easily become deranged, and seriously impaired. Man's state by nature is that of a creature suffering under grievous sickness. His soul is defaced and corrupted by the fall. Our unrenewed state is well described in the words of the Prophet; "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it." [Is. i: 5-6]. But there is no need of multiplying Scriptural passages, to settle a point so plain.

*Sin* is the most dreadful malady which can possibly afflict us. The plague and the leprosy were terrible; but they were as nothing, when brought into comparison with sin. These deadly maladies could only destroy the *body*, but when the breath of life departed from the poor clay tenement, the plague and the leprosy were

at an end. Not so with sin. This dogged its wretched victims beyond the narrow limits of *time*. The sufferings and the penalties of sin must be endured in *eternity*. In view of such intolerable misery, every lost and undone child of Adam should be ready to cry out, in the language of the text, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" And the heart-cheering response is ready: "Yes; CHRIST JESUS is the great and good PHYSICIAN. HE it is, who took upon HIMSELF "our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses." [St. Matt. viii: 17]. "HE it is who can make us whole."

Those who fancy that they are pure, and good, will not feel their need of HIS help; but all who see themselves in their true character, will gladly avail themselves of the great PHYSICIAN'S skill. [St. Matt. ix: 12]. It is in view of our sick and sinful state, that we are taught by the Church, to pray, that the same GOD, who called St. Luke, the Physician, to be "an Evangelist and Physician of the soul," would be graciously pleased to cure the fell diseases which are preying upon our spiritual existence, by the "wholesome medicines" of HIS blessed word.

At the opening of our public worship, we fall down upon our knees, and declare, in the touching language of the "General Confession," that "*there is no health in us.*" And the fact that this acknowledgment is made alike by those who are just beginning to realize the burden of sin, and by such as have long been striving to please GOD, shows that a radical cure can only be effected by remaining under the great PHYSICIAN'S

care, all our lives long. No partial remedies will answer. Sin is from within; and corrupts the heart. It is a canker, which has struck its roots far downward, and the medicine which is to reach it, must be powerful in itself, and applied with diligence and care.

Besides this daily confession of our unworthiness, and a heartfelt reliance on the healing touch of the LORD JESUS, there are other instrumentalities to be employed. Thus, in the exhortation which follows the solemn act of baptism, this direction is given to parents and sponsors. "Ye shall provide that this child may learn the Creed, the LORD's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to *his soul's health*."

It is worthy of remark, that until the time when the religion of the one true GOD was proclaimed throughout the world, men had no just conception of sin. The ancient Greeks and Romans possessed no word which answered to it. They understood what *guilt* meant, but *sin* was something which they never dreamed of.

"*Guilt*, in all its modifications, implies only a defect or a wound in the individual. *Sin*, on the other hand, the most mysterious, and the most sorrowful of all ideas, implies a taint not in the individual, but in the *race*; or, a taint in the individual, not through any local disease of his own, but through a scrofula equally diffused through the infinite family of man." [De Quincy's "Sphinx's Riddle."] Such is what is known as "*Original Sin*." This is "the fault and corruption of the nature of *every man*," as we are taught in the Articles of the Church, [Art. 9]. "And this infection



of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerated," in holy Baptism. "The Scriptures teach us that the sin of Adam not only made him liable to death, but that it also changed the upright nature in which he was originally formed, into one that was prone to wickedness; and that this liability to death, and propensity to sin, were entailed upon the whole race of mankind." [Bishop Tomline].

It is to creatures thus infected with a dreadful and dangerous disease, that the great PHYSICIAN, our LORD JESUS CHRIST, offers his healing balm; even HIS precious and atoning blood. None of us, my friends, have escaped this disease. We were born with it. We might boast, indeed, of our natural amiability, and honor, and kindness, and generosity; but, after all, the canker would remain at the root of this apparent good. "The column which was shattered to atoms by the fall of Adam, was the holiness of our nature, its purity, its love to GOD, and likeness to HIS image, and conformity to HIS will. These, in the natural heart, have all disappeared, and those moral virtues of kindness to your friends, and affection to your family, and honor and integrity to all, in which you are rejoicing, are merely like the leaves of the capital of the column, which are here and there scattered amidst the ruins of the mass; undestroyed, indeed, but as regards the column in its present state, utterly useless. Put them all together, and you could not re-erect the shattered pillar; no, not one single foot of it; all that you could gather up would be but these mere ornamental appendages, which, detached from the shaft on which they

grew, are as worthless as they are frail and fair." [Blunt's Lec. on Articles, pp. 29].

The effects of our depraved and fallen nature may be traced through all our lives, in the characters of the most devoted children of GOD. We can never say to the great PHYSICIAN, "Go THY way. We have no further need of THY help!"

In order to secure a tolerable degree of spiritual health, there must be a daily and devoted attention to the condition of our souls.

How many wise maxims have been handed down, and what a multitude of useful books have been written, showing how the body may be rescued from premature decay. What a constant regard to air, and exercise, and diet, and clothing, and many other things, is needed to accomplish this desirable end! And, surely, the well-being of the immortal soul, calls for, at least, an equal degree of watchfulness and care.

What course must be pursued then, in order to secure *spiritual health*? I answer.

1. *We must keep the mind as free as possible from vexing cares.*

There should be no unreasonable anxiety about what we shall eat, or drink, or put on. We should learn to cast all our care upon GOD; working diligently in the particular calling for which circumstances have fitted us; and remembering always the end of our probation, even *life everlasting*.

2. Again. *Daily exercise is essential for the soul's health.* We must work in GOD's garden, HIS holy Church, plucking golden fruit from the luxuriant

branches of the Tree of Knowledge. There is, likewise, the exercise of prayer, and faith, and studying the Bible, and attendance on public worship, and the Blessed Sacrament.

3. *We must also pay due regard to our diet.* The soul may be injured, and made deathly sick, by improper and unwholesome food. Bad books, and wicked companions, and vain conversation, will soon disorder and endanger its health. The "*Bread of Life*," as contained in the Bible, and in the expositions given of it in sermons; and the *Water of Salvation*, as conveyed in the ordinances of the Church, are the soul's most nutritious food.

It will also be of great service to it, to give up some gratification of appetite on the days of abstinence, which, for so many ages, the faithful have most conscientiously observed.

4. But besides keeping the mind free from care, and attending strictly to exercise and diet, *the soul sometimes requires medicine.* This is compounded of the bitter herbs of disappointment, and losses, and crosses, and bereavements, and trials of this mortal state. The good PHYSICIAN prepares these medicines with His own skillful and loving hand. HE watches the symptoms of our spiritual disease, and knows when the remedy should be administered. HE holds the bitter cup to our parched and feverish lips, and it is presumptuous and fool-hardy to attempt to turn our heads away or refuse to drink.

Let us, my Christian friends, who have placed ourselves under the great PHYSICIAN'S care, take heed

how we neglect HIS prescriptions for our good. The LORD JESUS "is every thing that fallen and perishing creatures can need. 'I am the LORD that *healeth* thee!' is a proclamation that well becomes HIS lips. Job disclaimed his friends as 'physicians of no value.' But this can never be applied to the LORD JESUS. In all things, in this office, HE has the pre-eminence. HE heals every complaint. No case, however difficult, baffles HIS skill. No case, however desperate, resists the power of HIS applications. HE is always at home; always accessible; always delighted to attend. HE only requires our submission to HIS management. HE cures without money, and without price." [Wm. Jay's Morning Portion, p. 309].

Have you no friends and kindred, whose souls are now fast becoming corrupt and decayed by sin; neglecters of prayer, and the preached word, and the other means of grace? And ought not you, who have been so fortunate to discover the PHYSICIAN for yourselves, to direct these poor, bewildered ones, *how* and *where they* may find HIM, too?

"During a heavy storm off the coast of Spain, (I borrow this apt illustration of my theme), a dismayed merchantman was observed by a British frigate, drifting before the gale. Every eye and glass were on her, and a canvas shelter on a deck almost level with the sea suggested the idea that there yet might be life on board. The order instantly sounds to turn the ship about, and, presently, a boat puts off with instructions to bear down upon the wreck. Away after that drifting hulk go these gallant men, through the

swell of a roaring sea; they reach it; they shout; and, now, a strange object rolls out of that canvas screen. It proves to be the trunk of a man, bent head and knees together. It is laid on the deck; in horror and pity the crew gather round it; it shows signs of life; they draw nearer; it moves; and then mutters; mutters in a deep, sepulchral voice, '*There is another man!*' Saved himself, the first use the saved one made of speech, was to seek to save another. Oh! learn that blessed lesson." [Guthrie's "Gospel in Ezekiel," p. 19]. You that have been made whole by the great PHYSICIAN'S skill, give yourselves no peace, until those who are near and dear to you on earth, have experienced the might of HIS healing power.

Hast thou a husband, sin-sick; sinking, day by day, towards the yawning mouth of the pit? Is thy wife a stranger to the new-creating influence of GOD'S SPIRIT? Are your children still the victims of inbred, corrupting sin; neither *using* nor *caring for* the wholesome medicines which the LORD JESUS CHRIST has provided for the soul?

Does the hardened indifference of a friend, to all that concerns his eternal interests, fill you with sorrowful forebodings? Despair not; faint not; falter not, in the discharge of a solemn duty in his behalf. Pray on; strive on; hope on. The same great PHYSICIAN who so mercifully stretched forth HIS hand to heal *you* and *me*, is none the less ready to help. Speak to the careless, dying one, of JESUS. May every thing in your own consistent example win his confidence, and enkindle a desire to be made whole

by that power which has wrought such a change in *you!* There is no reason why any sin-sick soul should give up, in hopeless despair. God's goodness is by no means exhausted. He is still mighty to save. No disconsolate sinner need look up, with streaming eyes, and bursting heart, and ask, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?"

## SERMON XLIX.

### THE EVIL HEART OF UNBELIEF.

[TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

---

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.—HEBREWS iii. 12.

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DIFFICULT as people sometimes find it to *come to* GOD, it is seldom a hard matter to *depart from* HIM. The slightest turning aside from the straight path of duty may take us much farther away than we had any idea of. And it should always be remembered, that a departure of any kind, whether from the *faith* or the *practice* of Christianity, is, in fact, a departure from GOD. Need I add, my friends, that a departure from HIM, is a departure from the only source of life and happiness?

Dr. Nelson mentions in his work on Infidelity, that for many years he had tried to persuade every unbeliever to read some book on the evidences of Christianity, and that he never knew but two instances fail of conviction, and, in these last cases, he had no opportunity of learning whether the examination of the question had been beneficial or not.

There can be no question that if the unhappy people who make light of the claims of our holy religion, would write down, in a plain, straight-forward way, all the absurd things which they profess to believe instead of it, they would find that it requires much more faith to *reject* Christianity than to *embrace* it.

All apostasy has its secret spring in the *heart*; and then it manifests itself in the *life*. Hence, St. Paul speaks of it, in the text, as "*an evil heart of unbelief*."

A want of confidence in the promises and threatenings of the ALMIGHTY, was the occasion of Adam's disobedience; and the same cause has brought upon the whole human family, the multiplied evils under which they have groaned.

In worldly affairs, the lack of confidence saps the very foundations of society. Can commercial transactions be successfully carried on, if men cannot depend on the business capacity, and moral integrity of merchants, and bank officers, and insurance agencies? Do we not deprive the sick of half their chances of recovery, when we have unsettled their confidence in the physician? And what son or daughter can enjoy peace of mind, who has lost faith in a parent? What anguish of heart comes in to rob that husband of happiness, who has no confidence in the virtue of his wife?

If such be the *natural*, and *necessary* consequences of a want of confidence between man and man, how much more deplorable are the consequences which follow, when our confidence in GOD has been shaken?

With how much earnestness and importunity,



therefore, does it become every minister of the Gospel, to repeat the Apostle's warning: "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living GOD."

It would form a *curious*, and not *unprofitable* subject of inquiry, to trace out the secret causes of skepticism, in those who are laboring under so fearful and fatal a delusion. In some cases it would be found to be *an overweening vanity*, which has been the parent of so many other follies and sins.

There is something very gratifying to the natural heart, to claim independence for itself, and, if possible, to overthrow long established principles and opinions, and to set up new ones in their stead. If a *revolution* can be brought about in the religious world, the notoriety which one gains by it is quite considerable. The knowledge of this fact, has planted the seeds of infidelity in the breast of many a votary of ambition. Those just starting in life are especially exposed to such dangerous snares. "The horror which a young man of talent feels, is the horror of being unknown and unadmired; he cannot wait to think of distant consequences; the parade of disbelief is too tempting for him, and he becomes a deist; a little more time elapses, and from the same vanity of extending, (or appearing to extend), investigation, he begins to call in question a superintending PROVIDENCE, and a sense of right and wrong; and, descending through a long train of theories and systems, from bad to worse, he settles down into a state of complete skepticism, upon every question whatsoever." [Sydney Smith's Sermons,

p. 102]. The encouragement of this deplorable spirit of doubt may be esteemed a mark of cleverness, by *some*, and be regarded as a matter of small moment, by *others*, but the Bible represents it as a sin; a sin which will be most assuredly punished. [St. John iii: 18; and xvi: 8-9; 2d Thes. ii: 11-12, &c].

The Apostle was, accordingly, influenced by a sincere desire for the welfare of the Christians of his day, when he so earnestly and affectionately wrote, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." I trust that I shall receive credit for the same sincerity of purpose, and the same anxiety for your eternal good, when I address his warning to you.

Besides the reason just given why some persons adopt skeptical views, I must go on to state that not a few fall into the same terrible condition, from *unpardonable ignorance* of the claims of the Christian religion.

Sir Isaac Newton began life a clamorous infidel; but on a close examination of the evidences of Christianity, he found good reasons for changing his opinion. When the celebrated Dr. Edmund Halley was expressing skeptical sentiments in his presence, one day, Sir Isaac said to him, "I am always glad to hear you speak of astronomy, or on any point in which mathematical science is concerned; for these subjects you have studied, and well understand; but you should not talk of Christianity, for that you have *not* studied!"

As a class, infidels are prating of subjects which

they know nothing about, and, therefore, their opinions on such matters are utterly worthless.

Dr. Johnson used to say, that no honest man could be a deist, for no man *could* be so after a fair examination of the proofs of Christianity. The name of Hume being mentioned to him, he answered, very decidedly, "No, sir; Hume owed to a clergyman in the diocese of Durham, that he had never read the New Testament with attention."

There is still another class of skeptics who are anxious that Christianity should be nothing better than a fable, because it condemns their evil lives.

When Wilmot, the infidel, was dying, he laid his trembling hand on the Bible, and said to those about him, with great solemnity, "The only objection against this Book is—a bad life!"

William Wilberforce relates that when passing through Dorchester, while Carlile was confined there in prison, he went to see him, and tried to engage him in a conversation upon the Scriptures. He, however, positively refused; said that he had made up his mind, and did not wish to be disturbed; and then pointing to the Sacred Volume in the hand of his visitor, he exclaimed, in tones actually frightful, "How, sir, can you suppose that I can like that book? If it be true, I am undone forever!"

*Loose life, and loose creed*, are too often linked together, to leave any doubt as to the close connection between them.

It is no uncommon thing for people to urge as a sort of apology for skepticism, that they *cannot* believe

what they *choose*, but must be governed by their *understanding*. This, on the face of it, seems quite fair; but even here, a word of caution is necessary. "In searching after truth, there are two things which *are* in our power; the *use* of our faculties, and the *due* and *impartial* use of them. If we fail of finding out the truth, or fall into error, by *not using* our faculties at all, or by using them improperly, we are certainly accountable to GOD who gave them, and who, as our sovereign LORD, has a right to *require* a due use, and to punish the abuse of them. In speculative matters, which no way concern our duty or happiness, men may be as ignorant as they please, without danger of guilt; but to be an infidel in religion through sloth and carelessness, for want of examining at all, or through a slight and superficial examination, makes them highly guilty in the sight of GOD. [Bp. Gibson's 2d Pastoral Letter, p. 120].

A quaint old writer, when speaking of *Reason* and *Faith*, compares them to two travelers. "Faith," he says, "is like a man in full health, who can walk twenty or thirty miles at a time without suffering. 'Reason' is like a little child, who can only with difficulty accomplish three or four miles. One day Reason proposes to Faith to go forth together. Faith consents, but declares, at the outset, that they would not get along very harmoniously. They set off on the journey, and soon came to a deep river. Reason cried out, 'I can never ford this stream!' Next, they reach the foot of a lofty mountain, and, again Reason exclaims, 'I can never climb this height!' And so, in

order not to leave Reason behind, Faith was obliged to carry him on his back; and a heavy load he had of it."

To those, who, from any cause, are tormented with an "evil heart of unbelief," it would always be a kindness for some friendly voice to repeat the assurance of the Divine word, that "*The secret of the LORD is with them that fear HIM.*" [Psalms xxv: 14]. That precious *secret* is disclosed to waiting and attentive souls; not all at once, but by a sort of gradual diffusion which makes them a part of ourselves; and thus, we become "partakers of the Divine nature."

The best wisdom of this world is only gained by long and patient study; and the wisdom which cometh from above must not be expected on easier terms. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the SPIRIT of GOD; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." [1st Cor. ii: 14].

Several learned men had been doing their utmost to persuade a scholarly infidel to believe in Christianity, but all to little purpose. A plain, unpretending farmer managed the argument on a different plan, referring the skeptic not so much to logical reasonings, as to the work of HOLY SPIRIT on the hearts of men. The result was most encouraging. "When I heard nothing but human reasonings," said the converted infidel; who tells the story on himself; "I opposed these reasonings with reasonings of my own; but when I heard the voice of the HOLY SPIRIT, I was obliged to surrender."

Well may the Apostle, in the text, urge it upon all who are in danger of cherishing an "evil heart of unbelief," to struggle against it, and overcome it; because this is the only way to secure GOD'S favor *here*, or to find happiness for ourselves *hereafter*. We cannot be too much on our guard against secret coldness and declension; a state so dishonorable towards that gracious FATHER whom we profess to love and serve, and so destructive to the best interests of soul and body. When the Apostle speaks of those afflicted with an "evil heart of unbelief," as having "*departed from the living GOD*;" it is plainly implied that they *once* belonged to HIM, and *professed* to obey HIS laws. It is, therefore, a *possible* thing for Christians thus to fall away from the faith, into the tangled paths of false doctrine, and open infidelity.

We cannot be too attentive in listening to the wholesome teaching of CHRIST'S Church, the Divinely appointed witness and keeper of the Truth. We cannot walk too diligently in her holy ways; we cannot submit ourselves too patiently to the wise and judicious discipline which she is so careful to enforce. Thus keeping near to GOD, there will be no danger of our "departing" from HIM, through the baneful influences of an "evil heart of unbelief," or from any other cause. Even infidels, when put to the test, have acknowledged the blessedness of those who have found a settled anchorage for their faith.

Ethan Allen, the hero of Ticonderoga, was, I am sorry to say, an avowed deist. He wrote several works against Christianity, which have caused the

ruin of many a young man, impatient of religious restraint.

While seated in his quiet home, glorifying in the independence which he had so bravely helped to win, and exulting in his imaginary triumphs over the Christian religion, he was suddenly called to the death-bed of a beloved child. She had been well instructed by her mother, in the doctrines and duties of revealed religion, and, at this trying hour, it afforded her not only *consolation*, but *triumphant joy*.

When her father, whom she regarded with respect and affection, arrived, she threw her arms around his neck, and, with a look of unutterable tenderness said, "Father, I am dying. Shall I venture into eternity believing your sentiments, or what my mother taught me?"

The veteran, whom no argument had ever shaken, and who had stood unmoved amidst the terrible din of battle, surprised by her heavenly serenity and confidence, answered, with tremulous and faltering voice, "My daughter, my dying daughter; believe what your mother taught you!"

The "evil heart of unbelief" cannot but tremble, when brought into contact with death; cannot but quail, when it realizes the certainty and the awfulness of the Judgment.

## SERMON L.

### DAVID'S BOYHOOD.

[THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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HE chose David HIS servant, and took him from the sheepfolds, to feed Jacob HIS people, and Israel HIS inheritance.—PSALM lxxviii. 70-1.

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IN several particulars, David was the most conspicuous and highly favored of the ancient worthies. He was a type of our Blessed SAVIOUR, and the author of many of those Psalms which have formed so large a part of the services of GOD'S Church under the Jewish and the Christian dispensations. He was a prophet and a king. David stands out in striking contrast with the prominent men of his own generation, and is as remarkable "for an affectionate, a thankful, a loyal heart towards his GOD and DEFENDER, a zeal which was as fervent and as docile, as Saul was sullen; and as keen-sighted and as pure, as Balaam was selfish and double-minded." Jesse, an humble peasant of Israel, had eight sons, of whom David was the

(451)



youngest. He was born, according to the best computations, in the year of the world, 2919\*

There was nothing in David's ancestry to entitle him to consideration, and, although as the descendant of Tamar, and Rahab, and Ruth, he might be supposed to share in the favor which GOD had shown to them, still, so far as his worldly advancement was concerned, he seemed to have no advantages beyond those of any other shepherd boy.

It would appear, from incidental notices in the sacred story, that David was of a devout and serious mind, unusual for his years, and this, in the providence of GOD, smoothed the way for his signal prosperity. Those who love GOD, will be loved and honored by HIM in return.

Actions are the best test of character, and from these we ought chiefly to form our judgment of a person's worth. We may, however, sometimes look at other evidence besides. Thus, although the language of cant, freely spoken on the house-top, is a pretty sure indication of hypocrisy and wickedness within, the outpourings of the devout soul in the presence of its GOD, can be ascribed to nothing which is inconsistent with the character professed.

The eighth Psalm, as has been generally thought, was composed by David during his early years. It opens with that rapturous burst of devotion, "O LORD, our GOVERNOR, how excellent is THY name in all the earth: THOU that hast set THY glory above the

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\*Calmet's Dictionary, (London edit.), p. 329.

heavens." Observe the humility of the youthful poet, as he contrasts his own weak and lowly condition with the might and majesty of the HIGH and HOLY ONE: "Out of the mouths of very babes and sucklings hast THOU ordained strength, because of THINE enemies; that THOU mightest still the enemy and the avenger."

And while the shepherd boy watched over his flock by night, (thus presenting another point of resemblance to the GREAT and GOOD SHEPHERD, our LORD JESUS CHRIST), he gazed up at the spangled firmament above, and, long before the days of telescopes and of marvellous astronomical discoveries, he read in every shining star fresh proofs of GOD's almighty power, and drew from thence inspiring hopes of a coming REDEEMER, who, while condescending to be born of an obscure virgin, should still be KING of KINGS and LORD of LORDS.

Listen to David's meditations on the wonderful works of GOD: "When I consider THY heavens, even the works of THY fingers, the moon and the stars which THOU hast ordained, what is man that THOU art mindful of him, and the son of man that THOU visitest him? THOU madest him lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and worship."

But besides such exalted expressions of love and devotion to his HEAVENLY FATHER, David's actions also showed that he had within him a true and living faith. Nothing has been recorded for the purpose of establishing this point; but the undesigned testimony which is afforded, is far more convincing than a labored argument. "Thy servant kept his father's sheep,"

said the heroic lad, in answer to a question put by Saul, "and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock, and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth; and when he arose against me, I caught him by the beard and slew him."

But do not be in haste to accuse David of vain boasting. See where his courage came from. He adds, with becoming modesty, and with the most assured faith in a higher power: "The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, HE will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." [1st Samuel, xvii: 34-37].

This is only one instance, indeed, but it shows clearly the character of the youth, and tells us of his habits of mind, and of his unreserved dependence upon the ALMIGHTY.

Such was David; a poor, obscure boy, but one of high and noble principles, and destined to act a most conspicuous part on the theatre of life.

We pause for a moment here, to remind parents of the important lesson which the early history of the King of Israel conveys. Let them do as old Jesse did; train up their children in the way they should go; and in after years they will reap the rich fruit of their faithful labors. We are told to "seek first the kingdom of God," and the righteousness thereof, with the assured anticipation that all needful things will be added unto us.

Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. [St. Matthew vi: 33; 1st Timothy, iv: 8].

The young have been instructed by David himself, as to the way in which GOD's love and favor may be gained. He looked up to the ALMIGHTY for help. So should all others do.

“With hearty zeal, for THEE I seek—  
To THEE for succor pray;  
O suffer not my careless steps,  
From THY right paths to stray.

“Safe in my heart, and closely hid,  
THY word, my treasure, lies,  
To succor me with timely aid,  
When sinful thoughts arise.”

Saul, who at first had proved himself worthy to sit upon the throne of Israel, had fallen by degrees into many evil habits, and finally provoked the LORD to punish him, for not dealing with some of the heathen as he had been commanded to do.

The Prophet Samuel was accordingly sent to Bethlehem, to anoint as the future king one of the sons of Jesse, who should be designated when he reached the place. Seven goodly youths passed in succession before the man of GOD, beginning with Eliab, the eldest born; but the old gray haired seer shook his head, saying to the astonished father, “The LORD hath not chosen these; are here all thy children?”

Then David was summoned in haste from the fields, where he kept the sheep; and as he drew near, glowing with health, and his countenance beaming with intelligence, the LORD said to Samuel, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.”

So the prophet took oil, and poured it upon David's head, signifying thereby that he should one day be King, instead of Saul. The sacred historian adds, that "the SPIRIT of the LORD came upon David from that day forward."

In this act of anointing, David was also a type of our blessed LORD. Thus, in the 45th Psalm, David, speaking in the character of prophet, says to the MESSIAH, "THOU hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; wherefore GOD, even THY GOD, hath anointed THEE with the oil of gladness, above THY fellows."

There can be no real goodness without GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT. Whatever in the character of David was pure and lovely, must be attributed to this source, and to this alone.

While, therefore, we are led to look with admiration upon those who show forth heavenly tempers in their lives, we have the satisfaction of knowing that the blessed SPIRIT who wrought such a change in them, is willing and anxious to do the same for us.

The gifts of the HOLY GHOST will be measured out in proportion to our needs. A man in a very high station, such as the head and ruler of a mighty people, or the bishop of an extensive diocese, or even a parish minister, requires more help from above than an ordinary Christian.

Grace enough will be given to each one who seeks for it with earnestness and prayer.\* It is the best blessing we can have.

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\* Collects for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, Easter Day, the First Sunday after Trinity, the Festival of St.

When GOD bestows HIS grace upon us in baptism, and' confirmation, and the LORD'S Supper, and in answer to our prayers, we ought to be most careful not to lose it afterwards. No greater misfortune could possibly happen to us. David felt this to be so, for he often prayed, as long as he lived, "Cast me not away from THY presence, and take not THY HOLY SPIRIT from me." [Psalm i: 11]. "We may see what David prized by what he deprecates. There were many calamities, at the thought of which his heart might have trembled. He could remember how GOD, for his disobedience, had punished his predecessor, Saul, and had rent the kingdom from him. He knew how GOD by Nathan, had threatened himself; and he could not help feeling the announcement, that the child should die, and the sword never depart from his house. Yet he does not say, 'O let me escape the rod; do not deprive me of my throne, or involve my family in trouble and disgrace.' This is what many have implored; but David prays, 'Cast me not away from THY presence, and take not THY HOLY SPIRIT away from me!'" [William Jay's Works, vol. i, p. 133, Harper's edit].

We are told next, that when "the SPIRIT of the LORD came upon David," this HOLY BEING with HIS sacred influences of grace and goodness, "departed from Saul." Poor, forsaken, wretched man! What has he left, worth speaking of? GOD'S good SPIRIT gone—for ever gone.

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Bartholomew, and others. Dr. James' "Comment upon the Collects" is an excellent work for devotional purposes, and may be read with profit before engaging in the services of the Church, on Sundays and Holy days.

Nor was this all. The withdrawing of the SPIRIT of the LORD from the miserable King, was followed by repeated attacks from an evil spirit, as a divine judgment upon him. His mind was depressed, and rage, fury, and unnatural hatred took up their silent dominion within him. The symptoms of his disease resembled those which we are accustomed to ascribe to derangement. As Saul was no worse in the beginning, than many who are living now, it may be well to ask what particular fault was the cause of so much misery. Wilfulness and unbelief are the characteristics of his history. His ear was closed against the plainest commands of GOD, and his heart encased in adamant. Once, he had enjoyed his day of grace; GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT had rested on him. Afterwards, he became reckless and debased.

The same HOLY SPIRIT has been imparted to us, who have been brought into covenant with GOD, through the appointed means of grace. If we sin now, our offence will be far greater than before. Alas, for those, who having once escaped from the bondage of an evil world, are again entangled and overcome! "It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." [2d Peter, ii: 21].

Here, then, are two characters, either of which we are free to imitate. We may be like David; loved of GOD, and blessed by the enlightening and sanctifying influence of the HOLY SPIRIT; or we may be like Saul; forsaken of GOD, and an outcast from HIS favor.

If the temper and disposition of our minds, and the regulation of our lives be in accordance with the will of GOD, the HOLY SPIRIT will make HIS abode with us. But if we are headstrong, and selfish, and disobedient; if the best affections of the heart are choked and kept down by the manifold corruptions which are allowed to enter therein, then GOD'S SPIRIT will go away.

Whatsoever was written aforetime, was written for our learning. Let us give good heed to these warnings from the past. One great use of biography is to teach us to follow the virtues, and to shun the vices, of those concerning whom we read.

No character is portrayed in the Bible with more diversified pictures of light and shade than that of the shepherd King. May we all lay to heart its touching and impressive lesson.



## SERMON LI.

### CONQUERING THROUGH THE POWER OF GOD.

[FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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I come to **THEE** in the name of the **LORD** of Hosts; the **GOD** of the armies of Israel, whom **THOU** hast defied.—1st **SAMUEL** xvii. 45.

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WE turn over a new leaf in David's history. It was stated in the last sermon, that when the **SPIRIT** of the **LORD** came upon the devout and heroic boy, who was destined to be the future King of Israel, this Heavenly Visitant abandoned Saul. Although wicked men richly deserve much more than they are required to suffer, few can behold them in the hour of their darkness and tribulation, without feelings of pity. So the attendants about King Saul, distressed at his wretched lot, devised various plans, which seemed to promise temporary relief from the malady which rendered his life an intolerable burden.

Among other things, they suggested the cheering effects of music. This idea pleased him, and "it was in an hour when the fitful storm brooded over his mind, that a youth was introduced to his presence; a shepherd

youth, that drew from the harp of Israel its holiest and sweetest sounds; a most gracious music, that fell as a voice from heaven upon the morbid feelings of the monarch, and charmed that agitated breast into repose; that morbid breast to which peace had been long a stranger. That youth was David; David, the rustic boy; David, yet free and ardent, and happy; David, yet pure in his enthusiasm, yet throbbing with incipient poetry, with innocent affections, with patriotic ardor, with every generous desire."

But we are anticipating the real order of events. According to the arrangement of our English Bible, David is represented, in the sixteenth chapter of the first book of Samuel, as being sent for to employ his skill in music, for the benefit of Saul; and then, in the seventeenth chapter, when David fights the Philistine giant, Saul inquires of Abner, who this youthful champion is. How could the King have been thus ignorant, if he had known Jesse's son before? The truth is, the chapters should be transposed, and thus every difficulty is removed.\*

A war was raging between the Philistines and the children of Israel, at which time some of David's elder brothers were serving in the army under command of Saul. God's people, by their disobedience, had lost His favor, and hence, they had less confidence in themselves; and when a great heathen giant, clad in glittering mail, came forth and challenged them to the fight, their souls died within them through craven fear. A

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\*See Notes in Townsend's Bible, (edited by Dr. Coit,) vol. i, p. 404.

seemingly trivial occurrence now brings David into notice. His aged father sends him down to the scene of strife, as a mere messenger, to carry provisions for his brethren in the camp. As the youthful hero draws near the bloody field,\* words of proud defiance fall upon his ear, and in spite of the sarcastic remark of Eliab, Jesse's eldest born, he volunteers to go forth, and do battle for the LORD. Flattered at first by Saul's proposal that he should accept his own royal armor, he might have been less successful had he gone to the fight in that showy array, than when trusting alone in the power of GOD. Recovering his self-possession in a moment, he positively declined the sword and helmet which the King had kindly offered for his use, and putting a few smooth stones in a shepherd's pouch, and taking in his hand a sling, he hastened forward, with holy boldness, against presumptuous self-confidence and conceit.

Ignorant of arts of war; a mere stripling in age and strength; unprotected by armor, and unprovided with weapons of defence; he trusted in the justice of his cause, and in the power of the GOD of heaven, whose honor had been trampled in the dust. Can we for one moment doubt as to what the result would be? The monster fell down dead before David's missile, and the victory was complete.

This part of the young hero's story has a direct application to ourselves. True religion makes no man

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\*The battle field is marked out for the traveller by the learned Dr. Robinson, in his "Biblical Sketches in Palestine," vol. ii, p. 21.

a coward. The bravest soldiers who have ever faced the cannon's mouth, and headed the fierce onset, have been devout servants of God. And there is good reason why this should be the case. When one feels that the eye of the ALMIGHTY is looking upon him with favor, he must of necessity be bold for any deed of noble daring. The certainty that GOD is on his side, will nerve the feeblest arm. What trembling skeptic would not envy the faith which led the brave Lord Astley to pray before he charged at the battle of Edgehill, "O LORD, THOU knowest how busy I must be this day; if I should forget THEE, do not THOU forget me."

But the lesson which we should learn, is of still wider application. All of us who have been baptized, have enlisted as soldiers of CHRIST. A challenge, more bold and presumptuous than that of Goliath, of Gath, has been thrown down by the power of darkness in the face of high heaven, insulting the majesty of GOD, and calling upon us, if we dare, to come out and fight upon the side of truth, and in opposition to the cause of sin. The odds all seem against us. The devil and his attendant spirits are giants in size and strength, and fully armed. We, like the youthful David, are exposed to fearful peril; but the same ALMIGHTY BEING who gave him strength, is ready to succor us.

Like him, we can boldly say to the vaunting foe, "Thou comest to us with sword, and spear, and shield; with all thy infernal weapons, and hellish arts; but we fear thee not; our trust is in the name of the LORD

of Hosts the GOD of the armies of Israel, whom thou has defied.”\*

Forget not, you that by baptism have put on CHRIST; forget not the manly part which it becomes you all to act. Even children in age can be bold for GOD and His Church, and do good service in the world. The smooth stone from the brook, when used in faith, is better far than a sword in the hand of unbelief.

Woe to those, who having learned the Apostle's Creed, the LORD's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, would venture to lay aside this simple shepherd's scrip, and clothe themselves in the untried armor of novel theories, and the religious dogmas of modern systems! The old shield of faith, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of GOD, are ready for our use.

Soldiers of CHRIST, arise,  
And put your armor on;  
Strong in the strength which God supplies,  
Through His eternal SON.

Strong in the LORD of Hosts,  
And in His mighty power;  
Who in the strength of JESUS trusts,  
Is more than conqueror.

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\* I have often thought that it is an argument for David's authorship of that noble Psalm, the Deus Auribus, that it contains the passage, "I will not trust in my bow; it is not my sword that shall help me; but it is THOU that savest us from our enemies." For again he says: "Through THEE will we overthrow our enemies, and in THY name will we tread them under that rise up against us." There is something here of the youthful hero, as well as of the sweet singer of Israel. The reliance of youth is celebrated in age. It has been tried, and it endures. [The Rev. A. C. Coxe's Sermons, p. 206].

It is supposed that the ninth Psalm was composed by David, upon the occasion of his victory over Goliath. According to a translation of the Chaldee paraphrast, it is expressly said to have been written "upon the death of the champion," the very title, you perceive, by which the Philistine giant is called.\*

Saul, in his perplexity and distress, had made the most liberal promises to the man who should kill this uncircumcised Philistine; and now, that the deed was done, he faithfully kept his word. David was "set over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people." [1st Samuel xviii: 5].

Each one of us, my friends, who proves himself to be a faithful soldier of the Cross, may confidently look for a still more glorious reward. A king will acknowledge our services at the last; not a weak and faulty one, like Saul, but HE who sits upon the throne of Heaven; even the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY!

David was received with marks of royal favor, in the sight of all Israel; but before an assembled universe the KING of GLORY will say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servants: enter into the joy of your LORD!"

The season of David's prosperity, at first, was destined to be short. In justice to Saul, we ought, perhaps, to say that his mental derangement made him more unreasonable and complaining than he might otherwise have been; but the truth is, it vexed

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\* See Exton's Lectures on the Psalms, p. 17, and Coit's Bible, vol. i: p. 406.

him sorely to be obliged to bestow such signal honors upon a poor shepherd boy, and to acknowledge that his sling and stone had done much more for Israel's glory and defence, than all the imposing panoply of war.

But Saul's jealousy and ill-will must have a sorer trial yet. The sacred penman adds: "And it came to pass, that when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women answered one another, as they played and said: 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands.' And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him, and he said, 'They have ascribed unto David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed but thousands; and what can he have more but the kingdom?'"

Do not move on too proudly, young hero, in this, thy first triumphant march. There is evil crouching in thy path. What sad workings of jealousy and wounded pride, and vindictiveness of soul, is discovered in that other emphatic record. "And Saul eyed David from that day forward." [1st Samuel xviii: 9].

Ingratitude is hard to bear. Those for whom we show the greatest kindness, will sometimes turn against us. It was thus that David suffered at the hands of Saul; but he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had done his duty, and this was worth much more than the thanks and gratitude of men.

We may all secure the same pleasant assurance for

ourselves. More than this; we may gain the good will and blessing of a merciful and gracious God "who is kind to the unthankful and the evil."

Saul's foolish jealousy drove David from the court; but the youth was greatly the gainer by it. He was thus early taught how little the blandishments of the world are to be esteemed; and amid the peaceful occupations of a shepherd, he had time to commune with God, and to prepare himself for the events of the unknown future.

We should be glad, of our own free will, to seek by occasional retirement from the busy scenes of life, to become better acquainted with ourselves; to receive strength, in meditation and prayer, for sharper conflicts yet to be endured.

The portion of David's history which has now occupied our thoughts, should teach us to be bold in the service of God, and kind and forbearing in our intercourse with men. Like the brave shepherd boy, we who are soldiers of CHRIST by union with HIS Church, have truth on our side; and in any contest with those who venture to assail the faith, we are sure of victory.

Be ye therefore strong, and very courageous; for we go forth in the name of the LORD of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel; and our hands are made mighty by the power of Jacob's God.

"The paw of the lion, the paw of the bear, the uncircumcised Philistine, in every case, needs strength. God alone can give the strength. God alone can give victory in every struggle with corruption, and in the



final struggle with death. But if you will fight as followers of CHRIST, regarding HIM as the CAPTAIN of your salvation, and depending simply on the aid of HIS SPIRIT, you shall be made more than conquerors; the giants one after another, shall fall before you, and the last enemy shall do the work of a friend, in consigning you to glory, and honor, and immortality." ["Golden Lectures," for 1855; James Paul, London].

## SERMON LII.

### DEVOTED FRIENDSHIP.

[FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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He loved him as he loved his own soul.—1st SAMUEL xx. 17.

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THE ancients gave friendship a place among the virtues. This is probably estimating it too highly; but it must readily be allowed that it is sometimes a special test of virtue. There is scarcely anything upon earth more pleasant to behold, than pure, disinterested friendship.

“The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above.”

Among all the examples of true friendship which have been recorded, none is so touching and beautiful as the affection which existed between David and Jonathan. From the insight already gained into the character of the heroic shepherd boy, we are prepared to expect a warm attachment on his part, whenever a worthy object should call it forth. David found such an object in the amiable and affectionate son of Saul.

The character of Jonathan presents an uncommon combination of manly strength and courage, and the

gentleness and winning sweetness which belong more exclusively to woman. "Dutiful to his father, he was faithful to his friend. Admitting his parent's rights, he did not partake his passions. He gave to Saul, through all his fury, the obedience of a subject, and the reverence of a son. Still he is faithful to David; true to him in danger; loyal to him in distress; protecting him with sleepless vigilance; adhering to him with unabated love." [Giles' Lectures, p. 224]. It is worth our while to notice how the friendship between these two youths began.

On the memorable day when the Philistine giant was slain by the intrepid David, King Saul inquired of the Captain of the Host whose son the stripling was; and then, the inspired historian adds, that during the interview between Saul and David, "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul." Friendships rashly formed are apt to be shortlived. In this case, however, we have an exception to the general rule.

It may be well supposed that there was some good reason which prompted Jonathan thus hastily to make the son of Jesse his dear and bosom friend. Some may, perhaps, suggest, that the valor which David had so lately shown in his contest with Goliath, and the signal victory thus gained for Israel, had its influence in bringing about such a result. But it must be confessed, that while heroic deeds call forth astonishment and admiration, they are not calculated to move those tender affections which prepare the way for true friendship and love.

Instances are now and then to be met with, in which distinguished abilities and sterling worth are blended with modesty and unaffected simplicity. This freedom from conceit and arrogance, when combined with rare mental endowments and heroic achievements, presents a spectacle peculiarly lively and engaging. Such was, no doubt, the powerful charm which fascinated the heart of Jonathan. The King's son had too noble a soul to undervalue merit, merely because its owner was poor, and of humble rank; and David had behaved so modestly, when another of weaker mind would have exhibited evidences of unseemly exultation, that Jonathan's affection was at once secured.

So much for the reason which best accounts for this sudden friendship. And now a few words should be added concerning its manifestation. True friendship consists in something besides smooth words and fair promises. It necessarily supposes deeds; kind, considerate, unselfish deeds.

And thus we find that upon the first occasion of their meeting, Jonathan actually unrobed himself, that the youthful hero might not be wanting in suitable clothing and weapons.

A few days later, we read that Jonathan, mildly but seriously, expostulated with his jealous father, on account of his unnatural treatment of his friend; and so successfully did he support his cause, that David was reinstated in the royal favor.

And then, once more, when the fickle, heartless King laid fresh snares for David's life, Jonathan, at the hazard of his own, warned the young man of his peril, and

pointed out a way of escape. Nor was this friendship all one-sided. David was quite as sincere and ardent in his attachment for Jonathan. Thus we read, that when Saul's furious hatred rendered it impossible for David to tarry any longer in safety at the court, the two sworn friends parted with bitter tears. "They kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded." [1st Sam. xx: 41]. And, a long while after, when Jonathan was slain, the survivor, with crushed and bleeding heart, uttered the pathetic lamentation over the mangled corpse; "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant hast thou been unto me, thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of woman." [2d Sam. i: 26]. And after a still longer period than this, when the dead had been buried, and by the many had been forgotten, the heart of true friendship kept that memory green; and David, now raised to kingly power, sought far and wide for Jonathan's child; and when the poor, lame youth was found, he pressed him to his generous breast, and said, "Fear not, for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake, and will restore thee all the land of Saul, thy grand-father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually." [2d Sam. ix: 7].

We all need friends. The world would be desolate enough without them. When we wish to describe one who is utterly forsaken and forlorn, we are wont to say that "he has not a friend upon earth."

It is in accordance with the promptings of nature, that we should seek for familiar friends. Social intercourse with the world at large, however pleasant and

profitable it may be, does not satisfy the longings of the soul. We require a closer intimacy, more unre-served confidence, a warmer affection, and a more tender sympathy, than mere society can give.

There are those who argue that it is wrong to make distinctions, and show partiality in this way. They would have us love all the world alike. But this is simply impossible, and to insist upon the adoption of such a rule would have the effect of banishing real friendship from earth. It is best to begin by cultivating an intimate affection towards those who are nearest to us; and then, gradually, the circle may be enlarged, until it embraces all who belong to the household of faith; and, finally, if you will, the whole family of man.

When the Bible commands us to love everybody, it only means that we shall endeavor to feel well disposed towards all, and to be ready to assist them when we can.

Our blessed SAVIOUR has set us an example in this respect. While no limit was placed to HIS benevolence, which included the whole guilty race HE came to save, HE had HIS particular favorites, and among the twelve Apostles, St. John, the youngest, and on some accounts, the most attractive of them all, was called, by way of distinction, "that disciple whom JESUS loved." So then, we need feel no uneasiness because we cannot bring ourselves to do what no human being ever did; to love all mankind alike. We should hate none, but we may very safely love some much more than others.

It was stated in a former Sermon, that David was a type of CHRIST. We may discover some traces of this in the particular instances of true friendship and love, which have now engaged our thoughts. We have one FRIEND, who, according to the expressive language of Holy Writ, "sticketh closer than a brother," [Proverbs xviii : 24]; even our DIVINE REDEEMER.

A parallel may be drawn, (although a most imperfect one), between what HE has done for us, and those acts of friendship so beautifully set forth in the story of David and Jonathan. Did Saul's gentle and generous minded son strip himself of his robes of honor and put them upon David, as an evidence of his affection and regard?

So did our blessed SAVIOUR lay aside that glory which HE had from the beginning, with the FATHER; and although there was no heaven-born courage, or any goodness found in us to attract HIS notice, HE clothed us with the robe of righteousness, and exalted us to the lofty dignity of being called the sons of GOD.

"HE left His radiant throne on high,  
Left the bright realms of bliss,  
And came to earth to bleed and die!  
Was ever love like this?"

We noticed, also, how, at the very commencement of their friendship, which they bound themselves by a solemn compact, should be a lasting one, Jonathan armed David with his sword and his bow, that he might be fully equipped for battle. In like manner, when at our Baptism and Confirmation, we enter into formal agreement with our LORD JESUS CHRIST, HE

puts upon us "the whole armor of GOD," that we may be able to stand against the deceitful arts of the devil.

Again, we read, that while David, cold, and hungry, and heart-sick, and weary, wandered about in the dreary wilderness, by reason of the hatred of Saul, the kind and faithful Jonathan sought out his friend in "the wood, and strengthened his hand in GOD." [1st Samuel xxiii: 15-16].

Has not JESUS been such a friend to us; a near, and dear, and considerate, and compassionate, and sustaining friend, in our deepest perplexities and troubles?

Once more, the example of David in taking so much pains to show his gratitude to Jonathan, by kindness to the poor lame boy, Mephibosheth, should remind us, that while our best friend, even our LORD and MASTER, is no longer in the world, and we cannot do anything for HIM, in HIS own PERSON, HIS suffering children are always with us here. O, do for them as David did for the son of Jonathan. Help them in their poverty. Clothe their nakedness. Satisfy the cravings of hunger. Give freely of some of the overflowing bounties which your ALMIGHTY FRIEND has confided to your care. If spirits in Paradise know aught of what is done in this world of sin, Jonathan may have looked back, with glistening and grateful eyes, when David, his faithful friend, showed kindness to his son.

The SAVIOUR will say to those, at the last and awful day, who have been charitable to HIS poor, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto ME."



## SERMON LIII.

### RETRIBUTIVE PUNISHMENT AND BLESSING.

[SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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And he changed his behavior, and feigned himself mad.—1st SAMUEL xxi. 13.

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It will be remembered, by those familiar with the history, that among the liberal offers which Saul had made, in case any one should be bold and successful enough to slay the Philistine giant, was this: that the King would give the victor the hand of his daughter in marriage.

David having performed the deed of valor, might now justly claim the expected reward. But even while professing to bestow favor, the jealous and vindictive Saul was plotting mischief in his heart. Accordingly, under the plausible pretext of stimulating the young hero to gain other glorious triumphs in Israel's behalf, he tempts him to go forth against the Philistines once more, saying, that upon his return as a victor, his eldest daughter should be his wife.

Saul, meanwhile, fondly hoped that some more successful giant might crush the aspiring stripling

beneath his powerful arm. The young soldier added fresh glory to his name, and fulfilled the hard condition which had been prescribed; but only to find himself disappointed and deceived; for Saul bestowed his daughter upon a more favored suitor. [1st Samuel xviii: 19].

But why detail the petty annoyances to which David was so constantly exposed? If I should pursue the plan commonly adopted by biographers, everything discreditable to the character of the hero would be carefully suppressed, and none but his good deeds made known. But I shall assume the higher and nobler ground which the inspired penman has adopted, to tell the whole truth, and if David does wrong, let him bear the odium thereof.\* After becoming son-in-law to Saul, by marrying his younger daughter, David was made the victim of all the plots and dishonorable schemes which the evil-minded King could possibly contrive; and finally, as the only chance of safety, fled stealthily from the court, and continued in exile until the death of his implacable enemy. This trial, however, did David good. Uninterrupted sunshine and prosperity for any long period are dangerous to us all.

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\*In a great naval contest of England, we are told that one ship ran aground so as to be out of the reach of the enemy, but contributed very much to the victory by serving as a beacon to the other ships bearing down into action. It was not a way of contributing to victory which any brave captain would choose, but it would be a matter of rejoicing even in this way to serve one's country. And so, though we would not choose that holy men of old should have fallen into sins, we rejoice that the great CAPTAIN of our salvation is making use of their failures to swell the triumphs of His people, and to bring glory to His own name.—*Rev. Wm. H. Lewis, D. D.*

It is only "tribulation which worketh patience, and patience, experience;" and if GOD has not given up all hope of making us better, HE will find means of subduing our pride, and perfecting our character in some way.

David sought first for Ahimelech, the priest, and with a pitiable falsehood upon his tongue, pretended that he had been sent on secret business by the King; and having eaten of the hallowed bread, which, for one in his starving condition, was well enough, he persuaded the old man to give him Goliath's sword, then hanging up as a trophy, "behind the ephod; and with conscience stinging and torturing him to the quick, he fled that day for fear of Saul."

Shame on thee, O favored man of GOD, who having once bravely confronted the giant to the teeth, armed only with a sling, now skulkest away as a coward, before the crazy King, even when armed thyself with Goliath's powerful sword.

Wrong-doing makes cowards of the bravest and best. Think not, my friends, that the tongue can be allowed to lie and swear, and bad passions be let loose, and the heart not flutter, and the knees tremble, when danger and death draw near.

Perhaps scarce knowing what he did, David next "went to Achish, the King of Gath," [1st Samuel xxi: 10], a dangerous and deceitful foe; and when, from secret whisperings about the court, he perceived that some fresh mischief was brewing here, (and good reason why, for had not David humbled the champion of Gath to the very dust?) the unhappy man, reduced

to the greatest straits, pretended that he was mad: and he, the glorious victor, over whose prowess the dark-eyed maidens of Israel had chanted their loudest songs of rejoicing; he, the son-in-law of Saul, like a poor idiot, "scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard."

Beware, you who have once experienced a lively hope of sins forgiven, through the SAVIOUR'S atoning blood; O beware how you fall off into evil ways, expecting to find a welcome with the enemy; that foul and treacherous fiend, whose service you professed to leave, and whose fierceness you have exasperated ten-fold, by having once abandoned his cause. The Evil One may pretend gladly to receive you back, but his bitterness and spite will cause you to taste a double portion of the torments stored up in his dark domain.

David, once more a fugitive, took refuge in a cave; a dark, subterranean retreat; and there, a band of four hundred men, who from various causes, had withdrawn themselves from public view, chose him for their captain. One might almost pluck a leaf from the Arabian Nights, to illustrate this romantic part of David's history.\*

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\*The country of Judea, being mountainous and rocky, is full of caverns, to which the inhabitants were accustomed to flee for shelter from the incursions of their enemies. [Joshua x: 16; Judges vi: 2; 1st Samuel xiii: 6; xiv: 2]. Some of these caves were very capacious; that of Adullam afforded an asylum to David and four hundred men, including his family, who resorted thither to him. [1st Samuel xxii: 1, 2]. The cave of Engedi was so large, that David and six hundred men concealed themselves in its sides; and Saul entered the mouth of the cave without perceiving that any one was there. At first it appears neither lofty nor spacious, but a low

The unhappy youth seemed now to have come to repentance and a better mind, for on two separate occasions, he spared Saul's life, when he found him fast asleep, and wholly in his power: thus showing that he could forgive him the injuries done to him by his fellow-men, even as he hoped that God would overlook his own.

With his returning sense of obligation to his HEAVENLY FATHER, the Divine love and favor are manifested once more towards him, and David was accordingly commissioned to go and save the inhabitants of Keilah from a threatened assault of the Philistines. Again the courage of the youthful champion returns, and again he is crowned with victory.

If you take this history in detail, (as time forbids our doing here), and accompany the persecuted exile from step to step, "you will find each single fault followed by a separate infliction; each return of duty and piety recompensed by a boon of mercy. He parted from Jonathan in prayer, and he is led to the house of the High Priest for consolation; he tampers then with deceit, and has ever after to reproach himself with the death, though the unintentional one, of the whole family of Ahimelech. [1st Samuel xxii: 18]. He faithlessly flees now to Achish, the Philistine, and

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passage on the left leads into apartments where a party could easily remain concealed from those without. The face of the hill around corresponds to the description, he came to the rocks of the wild goats. [1st Samuel xxiv: 2]. See Carnes' Letters, p. 307, Horne's Introduction, vol. ii., p. 32. Also Bp. Pocock's Travels, vol. iii, part i., p. 49; Robinson's Biblical Researches, vol. i., p. 498, and Wainwright's Pathways of our blessed Lord, p. iii.

he is driven thence as an idiot or a lunatic. He next fulfills the duty of a son, and provides for the safety of his father's household; and immediately the prophet Gad is sent to offer him the consolations of the LORD, and guide him to safety. And thus on, from passage to passage, every act of unbelief, every disobedience, brings down retributive punishment; every return of piety, retributive blessing." [Fleury's Life of David].

There is no safety nor happiness in the ways of sin. Things may seem to go well and prosperously with the wrong-doer, but it can only be for a season. "Be sure your sin will find you out." [Numbers xxxii: 23]. We are distinctly told, that GOD "will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality—eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but follow unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." [Romans ii: 6-9].

It is a very natural question to ask, why it was, after David had promised so fairly, and behaved so well, that he afterwards did so badly? How could the hero who slew Goliath, be transformed into the coward who fled from Saul? The reason was, that faith had become weak, and he distrusted GOD.

If we will take pains to examine our own hearts, we shall find that sometimes we are wide awake to our responsibilities, and most anxious to do all that we can to serve and please our HEAVENLY FATHER. Prayer, and praise, and attendance upon the service

and ordinances of GOD's house, are delightful to us. Then again, there will follow a season of coldness and indifference; our lagging energies scarcely sufficient to prevent our coming to an actual stand-still; something like the languor and debility felt at first under the murky atmosphere of Spring, after the bracing air of Winter has been heated by the scorching sun.\*

David has described this ebb and flow of his inner life, in different portions of the Psalms. Indeed, the whole Psalter may be regarded as a sort of thermometer, by which to measure the rise and fall of the better feelings of the soul. At one time we hear him exclaim, in tones of lamentation and self-abasement, "My soul cleaveth to the dust." [Psalm cxix: 25]. At another, as if a heavy weight had been lifted from his shoulders, and it was a real pleasure to do GOD's will, he says, with a tone of grateful satisfaction: "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep THY commandments." [Psalm cxix: 60]. The truth is, there is a leaven of inbred corruption within us, which only requires favorable times and circumstances to develop and enlarge. Our evil nature, which is "very far gone from original righteousness," [Article ix], cannot be suddenly changed; and we need never hope, in this world, that it will be fully restored to primeval innocence.

Sometimes, indeed, through the abundant mercy of GOD, the growth and ripeness of years have been acquired in a brief space; but this is by no means the usual course. Sin clings to us with a strong and

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\*To those unacquainted with it, the writer recommends a little book, by the Rev. Erskine Neal, entitled, "The Summer and Winter of the soul."

stubborn hold; and GOD teaches us, in our life-long struggle to subdue it, that we cannot be inactive, if we would effectually work out our salvation.

These considerations give us a clue to some things in David's case, which make his character appear to the unreflecting so full of strange inconsistencies. He was mortal, like ourselves, and the evidences of a fallen nature in *him*, as in *all* others, must now and then appear.

David found, by sad experience, how vain it was to rely upon himself. He had done wrong, and notwithstanding the ingenuity he showed in hiding in places which promised security, and the various deceits he practiced to win the favor of such as were able to help, he was neither safe nor happy. He had proved himself undeserving of GOD's protection and love, and had thus been deprived of every real ground of hope.

To some of you, my friends, we might appropriately address the Apostle's words, and say, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?" [Galatians v: 7]. Whatever the cause may be, which is drawing you aside from the way of duty, O, be sure that you watch against it, and through the grace of GOD, overcome it. We would not have you wander in the gloomy wilderness of uncertainty, nor starve upon the dry husks of worldliness, as the son of Jesse wandered, and hungered; but we pray GOD that you may experience all your lives long what *he* experienced when hearty contrition had brought him back from his evil ways; the loving kindness of HIM, which is better than life, even "the sure mercies of David."



## SERMON LIV.

### GOD THE AVENGER OF OUR WRONGS.

[SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker.—2d SAMUEL iii. 1.

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WE noticed, in a former Sermon, with what generous forbearance David conducted himself, when the vindictive Saul was quite within his power. He knew full well, indeed, that he could hope for neither peace nor safety until his enemy was dead, but he was too conscientious, and had too many of the better feelings of a man, to permit him to lift his hand against Israel's anointed King. How beautiful are such instances as this, of the power of DIVINE grace in the heart! David inherits "the prompt faith and magnanimity of Abraham; he is simple as Isaac; he is humble as Jacob; he has the youthful wisdom and self-possession, the tenderness, the affectionateness, and the firmness of Joseph. Be it our blessedness so to acquit ourselves in troubled times, cheerful amid anxieties, collected in dangers, generous towards enemies, patient in pain

and sorrow, subdued in good fortune." [Newman's Parochial Sermons, vol. i, p. 482]. And it would be well for us all, when disposed to rise up in just indignation against those who have done us wrong, to be willing with the patience of faith, to leave our cause in the hands of HIM who has solemnly declared, "Vengeance is MINE; I will repay, saith the LORD." [Romans xii: 19]. Poor, mad, forsaken Saul came to a wretched end.\* His death was that of despair and suicide. In another battle with his old enemies, the Philistines, the tide of success set strongly against him, and he sought in voluntary destruction, a relief from the grievous torture of his wounds, and the stinging mortification of defeat. [1st Samuel xxxi; 1-6].

Suicide is a most cowardly and disgraceful way of putting an end to earthly troubles. I say *earthly* troubles, but there will be other troubles, indescribably worse, in another world.

No one who begins a course of sin can feel perfectly sure (as much as he now abhors the idea), that in some moment of desperation he may not be guilty of the

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\* God gave up Saul, and the difference was manifest; the evil spirit occupied him at once. Rage, fury, unnatural hatred took up their silent dominion in the dark bosom of the King. Then came the stage of superstition. The large-minded infidel became narrowed to the small compass of the superstitions, and he for whom God and His Church were not wide enough, satisfies himself with the Witch of Endor. He who found the priesthood too confined a means to attain his end, and the sacrifices too formal, bowed before an incantation, and shivered before a ghost. Superstition is the end of the infidel. The only truly wide minded man is he whose thought and soul are limited by the word and will of God.—[Practical Sermons on the Old Testament, vol. i, p. 475].

horrible offence of suicide. The tendencies of evil doing are downward, and if obstinately persisted in, the deep and yawning abyss of destruction must inevitably be reached. "No gambler, no adulterer, no reckless voluptuary, no man who drains life of the last dregs of pleasure, can ever say that his own existence is secure from the fierceness of his passions. It is a sobered and chastened heart which makes a man respect and guard his own life; a belief that whether he is a beggar or a prince, whether he is tried by the good, or tried by the evil of life, it is his duty to remain till the great JUDGE bids him depart." [Sidney Smith's Sermons, "Carey & Hart's edit.," p. 234].

No sooner was Saul dead, than a messenger hurried from the battle-field to announce the news to David, thinking that because the King had been his worst enemy, the young man would, of course, be glad; and, perhaps, give him a handsome reward. So sure did he feel of receiving David's warmest thanks, that he even pretended that he had killed Saul himself, although, as we have seen before, the unfortunate monarch had fallen by his own hand.

Little did this foolish messenger know of the character of him upon whom he thus attempted to practice a gross deceit. David had no selfish wish to exalt himself, and when he saw before him one who, by his own confession, had slain his lawful King, he ordered him to be executed without delay.

Some may be disposed to question David's sincerity when he rent his clothes, and grieved so much at the death of Saul; but after we have learned to practice

the same noble spirit of forgiveness and forgetfulness of the past, we shall, perhaps, be better prepared to appreciate and decide upon his motives. [2d Samuel i: 17-27].

And now the time had fully come, when the son of Jesse, who had quietly suffered so many wrongs, was to be exalted to the throne. Long years had passed since that strange visit of the prophet to his father's house, when the anointing oil was poured upon the head of the unambitious boy. Old Samuel was sleeping quietly in his grave; but still his words were all fulfilled, and the influence of GOD's spirit, of which the outward sign had been the fitting emblem, had been preparing the mind and heart of David for the great responsibility at last to be assumed. At the age of thirty years, David was recognized as King. David, after his deliverance from Saul, and his victories over all his enemies round about him, [Psalm xxx: 7-8], confesses that this prosperity had raised him to such a pitch of confidence as to make him say, "that he would never be moved; GOD of his favor had made his will so strong;" but presently he adds, almost in the very same breath, "THOU didst hide THY face, and I was troubled." "The sun shines in his full brightness but the very moment before he passes under a cloud. Who knows, what a day, what an hour, nay, what a minute may bring forth? He who builds upon the present, builds upon the narrow compass of a point; and where the foundation is so narrow, the superstructure cannot be high and strong too." [South's Sermons, vol. i, p. 134].

There is a feeling, something akin to envy, which is apt to come over us, as we read the lives of God's ancient worthies, and we can scarcely suppress a plain expression of the wish, "O that our lot might be as exalted and glorious as theirs!"

David was indeed a great man, with all the pomp, and honor, and power, belonging to a king. But the destiny of every true child of God is in no respect inferior to his.

Has not the sure word of promise been given, that those who persevere unto the end shall be "made kings and priests unto God?" [Revelation v: 10], and shall sit upon thrones of glory, and wear crowns of gold, and be safe and happy forever in His eternal kingdom?

But then you may object, that we must wait a long time for this. True: and did not David wait long too, before he reached the earthly dignity which brought so much vexation and trouble with it? and shall we regard it as a hard condition to be obliged to do the same for blessedness without alloy and without end?

The first act of the young king when he firmly grasped the sceptre, was one of genuine kindness and godly love.

The men of Jabesh-Gilead, as it seems, with a noble and considerate care, had taken the mangled remains of Saul and Jonathan from the Philistines, and buried them with becoming honor.

David no sooner heard of this, than he sent messengers to these men, with warmest expressions of his approbation, and with the promise of a suitable reward. [2d Samuel ii: 1-7].

Although the young king had succeeded to the throne of Saul, it was not without a hard struggle that he kept possession of his lawful rights. Some of the Israelites still held fast to the tottering dynasty of the unfortunate monarch, and desired to give the crown to one of the sons of Saul. A long war broke out in consequence, which lasted until the last aspirant to the throne having been murdered by two of his own captains, all the tribes came to Hebron, and united in the solemn act of anointing David as their king.

After living at Hebron for seven years and a half, David determined to build a city which should be the capital of the kingdom, and the seat of religion. "There stood on the borders of Judah and Benjamin a strong fortress, which had remained in the possession of the native inhabitants, the Jebuzites, since the conquest of Canaan. The natural strength and long security of the citadel, tempted the Jebuzites to treat a summons to surrender with insolent defiance. David, however, took both the town and citadel, which stood on Mount Sion, and there established his royal residence. The situation of Jerusalem is remarkably imposing; it stands on several eminences of unequal heights, some parts of which slope gradually, on others the sides are abrupt and precipitous. All around, excepting in the North, run deep ravines or valleys, like intrenchments formed by nature, beyond which arise mountains of greater height, which encircle and seem to protect the city. It is open only to the North, as if the way had been levelled for the multitudes from the rest of the tribes to arrive at the holy city without difficulty or

obstacle. The hill of Sion, on which David's city stood, rose to the South; it was divided by a deep and narrow ravine from the other hills, over which the city gradually spread." [Milman's History of the Jews, vol. i, p. 190].

I shall not trace in detail the bloody records of the past, but rather draw from the simple statement of the text, such spiritual improvement as may be of service to ourselves. "Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David waxed stronger and stronger, and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker."

David may here be regarded as the representative of God's faithful people, and Saul and his adherents as the infatuated ones who presume in their weakness to withstand the power of the OMNIPOTENT. A constant struggle is going on between good and evil. We may adopt the very language of the text and speak of it as a war. There is a contest with our own evil passions, besides the dangers which assail us from every side. When we really wish to do good, evil is often present with us.

"Temptation without, and corruption within;  
E'en the rapture of pardon is mingled with fears,  
And the cup of thanksgiving with penitent tears."

We may also say of this struggle between good and evil, as the sacred historian has said of the contest between David and the descendants of Saul, "the war was long."

Literally, in David's case, it was but seven years

and six months that his peace was thus disturbed; while with every true Christian the war continues, with more or less fierceness, all his life. We are told at our baptism to fight manfully under the banner of the cross, even unto the end.

As sure as we persuade ourselves that the danger is past; and that the flesh is thoroughly subdued to the spirit; and that we can no longer be made the victims of temptation as in times past; and that we need not watch so vigilantly; and that the heavy armor may be safely laid aside, so surely will it happen that we shall be overtaken unawares, and our old enemy will come back, more fierce and bloodthirsty than before.

Again: it is stated in the text that "the house of David waxed stronger and stronger."

This must needs be the case with all who follow the commandments of GOD with sincerity of heart. Every successful resistance of evil will render us the better able to withstand it again. Our spiritual strength, like vigor of body, will be daily increased by use. Nor is this our only consolation. Whenever we show a disposition to do right, GOD of HIS mercy will help our weak endeavors, and crown them with success. HIS grace will be abundantly bestowed.

Each time that we receive the Holy Communion in penitence and faith, we go forth with braver hearts and stronger hands to do battle with the world. Once more: following the course of the narrative in the text, we are told that "the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker." Thus do the powers of darkness withdraw themselves, with reluctant and retreat-



ing steps, before the advancing triumphs of the truth. What is true of each individual Christian, is also true, in a much greater degree, of the whole body of GOD's believing people. His universal kingdom must go on conquering and to conquer; and no earthly power can let or hinder it. CHRIST's religion is something more than a philosophy or a creed. It is an *imperial power*, irresistible in its might and dominion; and every thing which stands in its way, will certainly be destroyed.

Has not this kingdom spread far and wide, in spite of all opposition? And have not all who have ventured in its way, been growing "weaker and weaker," like the adherents of Saul, in the long war with David?

Is not this kingdom of GOD gaining its triumphs by righteousness and mercy, and by overcoming the spirit of the world, its pride, and luxury, and irreverence, and cruelty, and profaneness? Can there be any doubt as to the final issue of such a contest?

Let it be our daily prayer, going not forth from feigned lips, that the LORD GOD may be with us as HE was with our fathers; and that HE may incline our hearts to walk in HIS ways, and to keep HIS commandments.

## SERMON LV.

### BLESSINGS SECURED BY THE ARK OF GOD.

[EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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So David, and all the house of Israel, brought up the Ark of the LORD with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.—2d SAM. vi. 15.

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KINGS and rulers show their wisdom by the public respect which they pay to the duties of religion. Merely upon the low ground of policy, obedience to the laws of GOD has sometimes been encouraged, as securing a prompt conformity to those of human appointment.

Still more wise and praiseworthy are those who, having as private individuals adorned the doctrine of GOD our SAVIOUR, carry their habits of reverence and devotion into the higher sphere of usefulness to which they have been called. It is gratifying to observe, in the case of David, that he continued to serve GOD as sincerely and as truly, when seated on the throne of Israel, as when a friendless youth, whose pathway was thickly beset with troubles and dangers.

We have ample proof of this in the becoming care he showed for the Ark of GOD. The Philistines, after one of their victories, had carried this holy treasure

away in triumph; but finding that it brought a continual curse upon their land, they gladly sent it back. The kingdom of Israel, however, had been in such an unsettled state, that no suitable provision had been made for the preservation of the Ark, and it had now been left for some time at Kirjath-Jearim, (about nine miles from Jerusalem), in great obscurity and neglect. Soon after David came to the throne, he made arrangements for a grand public celebration, in order to bring it up to the royal city, on Mount Sion. We find a distinct reference to this in the one hundred and thirty-second Psalm: "LORD, remember David, and all his trouble: how he swore unto the LORD, and vowed a vow unto the ALMIGHTY GOD of Jacob; I will not come within the tabernacle of mine house, nor climb up into my bed; I will not suffer mine eyes to sleep, nor mine eyelids to slumber; neither the temples of my head to take any rest, until I find out a place for the temple of the LORD, an habitation for the mighty GOD of Jacob."\*

He could not be satisfied to be dwelling in "a house of cedars," in ease and splendor, while the Ark of GOD had no permanent abiding place. "Lo, we heard of the same at Ephrata," (so the psalm continues), "and found it in the wood." The author of the Plain Commentary remarks upon this: "David and his father, and his brethren, while they dwelt at Bethlehem Ephrata, had heard of the Ark as being in the tabernacle at Shiloh, in the tribe of Ephraim; but when the time came for Israel and their king to seek for it again,

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\*Verses from *one* to *five* included. See remarks on these in Bp. Horne's beautiful Commentary on the Psalms, p. 487.

they found it not at Shiloh, but in the forest near Baalah of Judah, which is called Kirjath-Jearim, the city of the wood; and from thence they brought it to Sion, its new abiding place, from whence it was no more to remove. Even so has the Church heard the glad tidings of the true Ark. The incarnate SAVIOUR at Bethlehem, with the Shepherd, on Christmas day, and has found HIM on Good Friday, nailed to the wood of the bitter tree; but now knows HIM to be abiding in the Jerusalem above, on the throne of eternal glory." But, to resume the thread of the narrative, David gathered together thirty thousand chosen men, and attended by this vast assemblage, and amid the sound of harp and psaltery, and all kinds of sacred music, he went before the Ark of GOD, with raiment of fine linen, and "with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet." [2d Samuel vi: 15]. I have seen the lip of scorn and contempt upturned at some of the solemn ceremonials of religion; such as the laying of the corner-stone of a Church, or the still more imposing service at its consecration; but the Bible contains examples enough to show, that while such outward observances are calculated to make a deep impression upon the minds and hearts of the beholders, they are highly acceptable unto GOD.

But David, with all his anxiety to do what reason and religion might suggest, made some grievous mistakes. According to the requirements of the law, the Ark was never to be removed, except upon the shoulders of the priests. The king, however, had either forgotten this, or thought it a matter of no

importance, and accordingly he had it placed upon a cart drawn by oxen, as was customary in carrying heathen idols from one part of the country to another. In passing along the rough and uneven road, the Ark was shaken, and Uzzah, one of those who drove the cart, put forth his hand to steady it in its place. It was high time that the Israelites should be reminded that the GOD who had brought them out of Egypt, was not like unto senseless deities made with hands; and the presumptuous man, who, being unconsecrated to the priestly office, had ventured to touch the Ark, (even with good intentions), was struck dead upon the spot. [2d Samuel vi: 7]. GOD will not hold those guiltless who meddle with sacred things with which they have no concern. The priest has his own duties to perform, and the people have theirs. Let none venture where they do not properly belong. Those who are accustomed to be indiscreetly rash, would do well to remember Uzzah.

The judicious Hooker, in referring to this passage and others of kindred nature, observes: "It behooveth generally all sorts of men to keep themselves within the limits of their own vocation. And, seeing GOD, from whom men's several degrees and pre-eminences do proceed, hath appointed them in HIS Church, at whose hands HIS pleasure is that we should receive baptism and all other public medicinable helps of soul, perhaps, thereby the more to settle our hearts in the love of our ghostly superiors, they have small cause to hope that with HIM their voluntary service will be accepted, who thrust themselves into functions either above

their capacity or besides their place, and over boldly intermeddle with duties whereof no charge was ever given them. They that in anything exceed the compass of their own order, do as much as in them lieth to dissolve that order which is the harmony of God's kingdom." [Ecclesiastical Policy, Book v, chap. lxii, p. 13].

It is not uncommon for men to be willing to serve God, provided they can do it in their way, and according to their own caprices. Some will not be satisfied without a modification of the faith which has been handed down unchanged from the earliest times, and others insist that services and ceremonies made sacred by long association, shall give place to the bald and unimpressive forms of modern contrivance. But the ALMIGHTY would have all to hold fast the same creed, and to worship HIM in the beauty of holiness. HE never calls any to adopt an imperfect creed, or to take up with systems which are exposed to constant uncertainty and change. But not a few are highly offended to be thus kept under wholesome restraint. Even David, on the occasion of the death of Uzzah, was displeased because the LORD had thus openly manifested His "indignation," and he was afraid of the LORD that day, and said, "How shall the Ark of the Lord come to me?" Indeed, so great was his mortification and alarm, that the public ceremonial was interrupted, and, instead of carrying up the Ark to the capital, the procession turned aside, and left it in "the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite."

For the space of three months, the Ark continued in this place. Obed-Edom, it appears, prized the

privilege thus unexpectedly vouchsafed, and the reverence which he showed for the sacred treasure, brought a rich blessing with it. "The LORD blessed Obed-Edom, and all his household." [2d Sam., vi: 11].

Health, and honor, and prosperity, were showered down on those who manifested their love for GOD, by respect for the symbol of His glorious presence. "Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is," as well as of the enduring blessedness of that which is to come. One evidence of godliness is a proper respect for holy places, and holy things. O, that every Christian heart may glow with such zeal and warmth for all that concerns the kingdom of our LORD, that none can look upon his holy temple, even while moving about in worldly business, from day to day, without an expression of the Psalmist's earnest desire: "Peace be within thy walls. For my brethren and companions sake, I will wish thee prosperity!" [1st Samuel cxxii: 7-8].

It is a real privilege, in more ways than one, to live close by the Church, and, although we may not, like Obed-Edom, carry to our homes the Ark of the LORD, we may always keep there the ark of *mercy*; the covenant of salvation, revealed in the glorious Gospel of the SON of GOD.

The temporary sojourn of the Ark beneath the roof of the humble Jew, secured so many signal blessings to the family, that the strange tidings reached the ears of David, and again he determined to carry out his former plan of setting up the Ark in the royal city. Before leaving this point in the history, it may be proper to

mention, that a long time after the events of which we are speaking, Obed-Edom and his sons received an honorable appointment in the temple; a fact which leads us to believe that they continued steadfast unto the end. [1st Chronicles xv: 18-21].

The fears and scruples of the king being completely removed, he "brought up the Ark of GOD from the house of Obed-Edom into the city of David with gladness."

All things were done decently and in order. David had got over his foolish conceit, that an outward attention to the proprieties of religious services did not matter much; and the Ark was borne in due form upon the shoulders of the priests, arrayed in their robes of office, and at the very outset of the triumphal march, as if in atonement for former irregularity and error, a burnt sacrifice was solemnly offered.

Whenever in the first beginnings of a godly life we feel that we are too vile and polluted to accept the gracious offer of our LORD; "If a man love ME, MY FATHER will love him, and WE will come unto him, and make OUR abode with him," [St. John xiv: 23], and we are ready to say with the centurion, "I am not worthy that THOU shouldest come under my roof," we can sympathize with David when he was afraid to receive the sacred Ark within the gates of Jerusalem. But afterwards, perfect love having cast out all slavish fear, the DIVINE PRESENCE will be welcomed to our hearts and homes with warmest thanksgivings, and with the voice of praise.

"And they brought in the Ark of the LORD, and



set it in his place, in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it, and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD." [2d Samuel, vi: 17].\*

When the grand pageant was thus happily ended, the king, with his accustomed liberality, provided the people with ample supplies for joyous festivities at their homes, and then, although he must have been wearied with the excitement and exercises of the day, he "returned to bless his household."

No doubt those high in authority have some times joined with heartless formality in the public ceremonies, to which time-honored custom has obliged them, reluctantly, to conform; but when he privately engages in the duties of religion, his sincerity can no longer be questioned. David wished to set a becoming example to his family, and he was most anxious that all who looked up to him as husband, or father, or lord, might learn to love and obey the GREAT BEING who had so graciously crowned his days with mercy and loving kindness. Will not every head of a family strive faithfully to "bless his household," as David did by religious instruction and prayer?

But with all the satisfaction which the king of Israel must have then enjoyed, there was one serious drawback to his peace, and that from a quarter which you might least suspect. His own wife, the daughter of Saul, and a worthy descendant of that bad stock,

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\* "David a Churchman," in Dr. Lay's admirable "Tracts for Missionary Use," vol. ii, p. 489, is well worth reading.

made light of the appearance of devotion which David had that day exhibited; for she had watched him from the window with evil eyes, as the joyful procession moved along; Asaph and his brethren uniting in the triumphal chant, while the king, in holiday attire, led the sacred band.

Scarcely waiting until he had reached the sheltered privacy of home, she exclaimed, in sarcastic tone and words, "How glorious was the king of Israel to-day!" Nay, she even compared him with the debauched and shameless profligates, who glory in the exposure of their vileness and pollution to the world.

The same woman who had conceived a passionate love for David when she saw him first, flushed with victory, with the head of the Philistine in his hand, now expressed undisguised contempt for him, because he yielded to the impulses of earnest devotion, and paid public honor to the LORD, in a way which she chose to regard as unbecoming in the hero and the king.\* Her punishment was significant. She was childless, and that because she *despised* David. Her fall and her signal punishment enforce the direction of the Apostle: "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." [Ephesians v: 33]. David's language, in answer to Michal's reproachful words, was decided, and yet not improperly severe. He pleaded in excuse

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\* The Jews considered it a part of their religious duties to join in the dance, with tabret and harp. [Psalm cxlix: 3]. It was in accordance with this custom that David danced before the Ark. [1st Chron., xv: 29; 2d Samuel vi: 14]. This mode of worship was probably borrowed from the Egyptians. [See Wilkinson's Ancient Egyptians, vol. i, p. 140].

that his zeal, which had excited her displeasure, had been exhibited before the LORD, who had exalted him to honor, and he declared his settled purpose to show still deeper humiliation and gratitude in time to come, in spite of the opinion of the world.

Archbishop Leighton, with sweet quaintness, enforces the lesson which this portion of the history should teach; "It is no matter though the profane world, (which so hates GOD that it cannot endure HIS image), do mock and revile; it is thy honor to be, as David said, [2d Samuel vi: 22], thus more vile, in growing still more like unto him in holiness. What though the polite man count thy fashion a little odd and too precise, it is because he knows nothing above that model of goodness which he hath set himself, and therefore approves of nothing beyond it. He knows not GOD, and therefore doth not discern and esteem what is most like HIM. When courtiers come down into the country, the common, home-bred people possibly think their habit strange, but they care not for that; it is the fashion at court. What need, then, that the godly should be so tender foreheaded, as to be put out of countenance because the world look on holiness as a singularity? It is the fashion in the highest court, yea, of the KING of KINGS himself." [Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Peter, chap. i, v. 16].

## SERMON LVI.

### THE SECRET OF DAVID'S FALL.

[NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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Thus saith the LORD, Behold I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house.—2d SAMUEL xii. 11.

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THE points in David's history which we have had occasion thus far to notice, have been for the most part pleasant to dwell upon. We have seen David as an heroic lad, the faithful friend, the gentle and forgiving man, the humble and devout believer, the good and righteous king; but, alas, for human nature, truth obliges us now to hold up a very different picture, and one in which it is difficult to recognize the character we have seen before; David, the adulterer, and the murderer!

While endeavoring to deal faithfully with this subject, GOD grant that no unbecoming "sharpness," [2d Corinthians xiii: 10], may be used, and that even just indignation may be tempered with mercy. Great and shocking crimes are the result of much previous preparation, in the shape of unrestrained evil thoughts and debasing influences. Few are found to commit

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them from sudden impulse. Some secret cause must have been doing its silent work, to have changed that David whom we have lately seen so devout and godly, into the man whose horrible wickedness now makes us shudder. Neither is this cause unknown. It was nothing more nor less than idleness and luxurious living, which opened his heart for the entrance of corruption and sin.

David had been chosen in Saul's stead, that Israel might have a notable champion to maintain its rights; but instead of leading the army, as usual, in making assaults upon idolatrous nations, he left his captains to do the best they could without him, while he reposed at the palace in inglorious ease.

Let us never esteem it a hardship that our time is fully occupied with daily labor, for this is a merciful provision to save us from temptation and ruin. Idleness is the mother of vice. Those who venture to spend their precious hours in the lap of ease and self-indulgence, will be found, sooner or later, doing the devil's work, and receiving his wages. The enervating effects of luxury accomplished David's fall. "At the time that kings go forth to battle," says the sacred writer, "David sent Joab, and all his servants with him, and all Israel: and they destroyed the children of Ammon, and besieged Rabbah; but David tarried still in Jerusalem. And it came to pass, in an eventide, that David rose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon." [2d Samuel xi: 2].

No reason is assigned why the king of Israel remained idle in his palace, while others went forth to fight. "The picture which follows, of a king sleeping during the noon-day, and rising from his bed in the evening, though the practice be not uncommon in those hot countries, does not give us the idea of one actively employed in the service of his country, or in the important duties of his station. Had David, it may be thought, been fighting the LORD'S battles against the heathen, or had he been duly anxious for the happiness and government of the people whom GOD had placed under his care, he would have been far removed from the temptation which overpowered him, and have had other thoughts to occupy his mind, than the beauty of a stranger. Let us, then, always remember, that as the only method of destroying weeds, is by plowing deep and diligently laboring the soil, so is it that by honest labor and rational occupation, we are best able to keep away evil thoughts from the soul. It is when men are idle and slumbering, that the devil sows tares in their hearts; and our hearts, if not employed, will as soon gather defilement as the sword gathers rust, when suffered to hang idle on the wall." [Bp. Heber's Parish Sermons; Murray, London, vol. ii, p. 101].

Circumstances had so shaped themselves, and the king had so readily fallen in with the current which was hurrying him onward to the breakers, that nothing was needed but a slight temptation to call forth the secret power of sin. The beautiful Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, is employed by Satan for this end. The faithful captain is shamefully wronged by the king whom he served so well.

The royal offender, having blackened his soul with infamy and guilt, now dreads the incensed husband's wrath; and resorts to the lowest and most contemptible arts to shelter himself from the vengeance so richly deserved. Milder plots and contrivances having failed, with cold blooded treachery, Uriah is sent with his death-warrant, to be executed by the connivance of Joab. "David wrote a letter to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah. And he wrote in the letter, saying, Set ye Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retire ye from him, that he may be smitten, and die." [2d Samuel xi: 14-15].

What a catalogue of crimes! Indolence, luxury, lust, adultery, hypocrisy, falsehood, treachery, murder! And, besides contracting all this guilt himself, David draws others into the vortex with him. The wife of Uriah not only falls a victim to the shameful passion of the king, but it is on her account that the unoffending man must be slain. The laws of honor are violated by obliging Joab to act so base a part towards a brave companion-in-arms. The common soldiers, too, who were commanded to retire and leave Uriah to the mercy of the enemy, thus became accomplices in the murder.

Alas! how are the mighty fallen! Let us be careful not to be too hard in our censure and condemnation.

The heart of every one is "deceitful above all things," and, until transformed by the power of God's grace, "desperately wicked." "Out of the heart," says our blessed SAVIOUR, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies."

[St. Matthew xv: 19]. Yea, out of such hearts as ours, proceed all these awful sins, and every heart which is not watched and guarded night and day, may be unexpectedly betrayed. We cannot pray with too much earnestness, when the sixth and seventh commandments are rehearsed in the service of the Church. "LORD have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep these laws!"

O, let us strive after purity of heart, without which no one can see GOD in peace.

David an adulterer! Son of Jesse, we forget thy glorious triumph over the stout Goliath. We think not now of thy forbearance, nor of any of thy good qualities of heart; the terrible shock occasioned by thy fall has driven them from our minds. We felt sympathy for thee, David, when Saul dogged thy steps about, and when thy wicked wife made sport of thee for dancing before the Ark; but now, we pity thee no more.

The cruel and unjust world may openly point the finger of scorn at poor Bathsheba; but, king though thou art, GOD's angry look is turned on thee; and good Samuel, who once poured on thee anointing oil, now seems rising from his grave, with his shroud around him, to heap upon thy head his withering curse. Let others besides David treasure up such a lesson.

A poor, fallen woman, in flaunting, gaudy dress, is moving along in the crowded streets to attract the attention of evil men. Once, this same being, as a little timid girl, was watched over by a tender mother, and



loving sisters taught her to stand, and run, and curled her golden hair. She called GOD her FATHER, and delighted to speak with HIM in prayer. For months and years, she continued as at the beginning of her course. Then, "faint thoughts of evil, like a far off cloud which the sunset gilds, came first; nor does the rosy sunset blush deeper along the heavens, than her cheek at the first thought of evil. Now, ah! mother and those guiding elder sisters, could you have seen the lurking spirit embosomed in that cloud, a holy prayer might have broken the spell, a tear might have washed its stain! Alas! they saw it not; she spoke not, she was *forsaking the guide* of her youth. She thinketh no more of heaven. She breatheth no more prayers. She hath no more penitential tears to shed; until, after a long life, she drops the bitter tears upon the cheek of despair, then her only suitor. Thou hast forsaken the covenant of thy GOD. Go down!" She had listened once to the enticing, lying words of some deceitful David, and this is the end thereof.

Go, and weep tears of blood, O thoughtless man, over that lowly wayside grave, upon which the summer's sun expends its fierceness, and the winter's storm beats with pitiless force, and no one thinks, or cares, that an immortal being, happy once, but lost, now forever lost, sleeps there in her narrow bed. Repent, heartily repent, while yet you may, O gay deceiver, lest having been called away unforgiven of GOD, thy crimes be found registered against thee in the book of his remembrance. We should all beware how we venture to pervert the example of David, and thus

fancy that we have found an apology for sin. "Let us not flatter ourselves, that because he, so devout, so religious, so distinguished by the favor of heaven, was once most fatally seduced into sin, that we may therefore commit the same or similar crimes with impunity. On the contrary, if these crimes appear so odious and detestable, even in a Jewish monarch, who had to plead in his excuse (though all excuse was vain), the temptations of a court, the manners of the times, the peculiarity of his own circumstances, and the liberties too often taken by men in his situation; they must assume a more frightful aspect in a private Christian, who has none of these mitigating pleas to offer, who lives in much more enlightened and civilized times, has much stricter rules of moral conduct presented to him in the Gospel, is called to a much higher degree of purity and holiness, has far more powerful aid from heaven to support him in his duty, more terrible punishment to work upon his fears, and more glorious rewards to animate his hopes."

Thus plainly spoke good Dr. Porteus, the Bishop of London, in days when pungent preaching was by no means a common thing. Months and months had passed, the murdered Uriah was mouldering in the grave, and David, who might much better have been dead, continued insensible to his guilt. A spirit of deep slumber would seem to have completely mastered him. But our heavenly FATHER, who once loved David with so tender an affection, had not quite forsaken the wretched offender, but made one effort more to rouse his torpid conscience. The prophet Nathan

was accordingly sent to him, who addressed the shameless monarch in the form of a beautiful allegory. "There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor." (We may readily imagine how attentively David listened. He little dreamed that there was any reference to himself). "The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had brought and nourished up, and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock, and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was to come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb and dressed it for the man that was come unto him." [2d Samuel xii: 1-4]. Although the fable was so direct and pointed, David did not discover his own misdeeds in the prophet's story,\* and insisted, in the height of his indignation, that the guilty wretch who had thus wronged the poor man of his lamb, should instantly be put to death.

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\* Bishop Butler, the author of the "Analogy," has a masterly discourse on "Self-deceit," founded on this incident in David's life. He thus concludes: "It is manifest, that there is such a thing as this self-partiality and self-deceit; that in some persons it is to a degree which would be thought incredible, were not the instances before our eyes, of which the behavior of David is perhaps the highest possible one, in a singular particular case, for there is not the least appearance that it reached his general character; that we are almost all of us influenced by it in some degree, and in some respects, that therefore every one ought to have an eye to and beware of it. And all that I have further to add upon this subject is, that either there is a dif-

What must have been the dismay of the royal offender, when Nathan, raising his finger, said with solemn emphasis: "Thou art the man!"

David was too noble to give way to resentment, when he knew himself to be wrong, and with a contrite and sorrowing soul, he meekly answered, "I have sinned against the LORD!"

Nor was this brief confession all. His whole after life showed how sincere he was, and how deeply he felt the weight of his guilt and unworthiness.

Let any one read the fifty-first Psalm, which was composed upon this occasion, and doubt David's repentance if he can.

"The agonies of his soul pass all description. Words fail him, as he attempts to express them. In the thirty-eighth Psalm he compares his recollections of sin to arrows darting into his flesh, to a wasting disease, to rankling wounds, to broken and aching bones."\*

If we would obtain relief from the upbraidings of

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ference between right and wrong; or there is not; religion is true, or it is not. If it be not, there is no reason for any concern about it; but if it be true, it requires real fairness of mind and honesty of heart. And if people will be wicked, they had better of the two be so from the common vicious passions, without such refinements, than from this deep and calm source of delusion, which undermines the whole principle of good; darkens that light, that candle of the LORD within, which is to direct our steps, and corrupts our conscience, which is the guide to life.—Bp. Butler's Works, (Robt. Carter's edit.), p. 124.

\* Bradley's Sermons, p. 80. Those who would see how the case of David is viewed from a Mohammedan stand-point, can refer to "Sales Koran," p. 372.

conscience, and the horrors of remorse, let us confess our sins now, while GOD is calling us to do so. But although the ALMIGHTY spared David, and forgave his dreadful crimes, and did not swear in HIS righteous displeasure that he should never enter into heaven, yet the king paid dearly for his sins. The fearful sentence of the text was executed to the letter, "Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house."

We shall have occasion hereafter, to show you proof of this in the history.

Now, my friends, if even the man after GOD's own heart was stung and tortured all his days, by reason of his one transgression, think you that sinners in these times can escape?

O, beware, beware, how you indulge in wrongdoing. It is true, our blessed REDEEMER is able and willing to save unto the uttermost, all who come unto GOD by HIM. Thus you may gain pardon. Thus you may escape from hell.

But those who commit the sins which David did, will know from their own experience what he suffered. No matter how sincerely they may repent; no matter how freely they may be pardoned; they, too, will be vexed and distressed by thankless, dissipated and worthless children, who will bring down their gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Do not oblige the ALMIGHTY to say of any of you, "I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house!"

## SERMON LVII.

### THE DISOBEDIENT SON.

[TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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Is the young man Absalom safe?—2d SAMUEL xviii. 29.

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WE have lately been dwelling upon David's grievous sin. The suffering which followed it will now be brought before. Previous to the commission of those awful crimes of adultery and murder, he was, comparatively, a happy man. From the moment, however, that he forsook GOD, troubles multiplied, and he went mourning all his days.

When David is represented as suffering under the just judgments of heaven, the language is adapted to our ordinary mode of thinking and speaking. CHRIST JESUS has made a full atonement for the sins of all who flee unto him for pardon. No sufferings, then, which follow sins, can be regarded in any sense, as expiations for them. Our SAVIOUR'S atonement is quite enough. The sufferings which we endure, are only in the way of discipline, and are designed to correct and amend in us whatever may offend the eyes of our HEAVENLY FATHER. David repented, truly and

sincerely, and GOD forgave him; but the seeds of his misdoing continued to bring forth bitter fruits during all the remaining days of life.

It was about the space of twelve years before all that was implied in the terrible sentence, "I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house," was fully accomplished. Yet not one jot or tittle of what had been threatened, failed to come to pass. Four of David's children were taken from him. The son of Bathsheba, upon whom he doted with all a fond father's love, pined away and died. A daughter, fair and beautiful, remained dishonored in his house. His own profligate and abandoned son, who had done shameful wrong, was slain by bloody violence. And then, perhaps harder than all to bear, Absalom, the handsome and gifted Absalom, turned rebel against his father's throne.

All these were judgments of GOD, designed as salutary discipline for David's good. His sin had been months and months in coming to maturity, and breaking out into disgraceful excesses, but his repentance began at once. This is seen in the patience and resignation with which he submits to GOD. He also begins again to discharge those public duties, the neglect of which had betrayed him into sin. The siege of Rabbah, beneath the walls of which the brave Uriah had been slain, was now pressed on with vigor, and taken by assault and storm, and all the cities of the Ammonites were overthrown.

We need have no surer evidence of true repentance than when, like David, we meekly acknowledge our

vileness, and are truly sorry for our faults, and turn back, with child-like obedience, to perform our neglected duties. "Behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort," says the Apostle who knew the corruptions of human nature so well, and its only cure, "what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves; yea, what indignation; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge." [2d Corinth. vii: 11]. The persecution by Saul was a heavy trial, but it was as nothing, compared with what David suffered, when the ingrate Absalom sought his aged father's life, and drove him forth from Jerusalem. See the king, with trembling steps, heading the long procession of exiles\*, who wept aloud at this indignity offered to him whose wisdom and valor had done so much for Israel's renown. The sacred Ark, borne upon the shoulders of the priests, follows in the train. Suddenly David stops and commands that it shall be returned in safety within the city walls, saying, in a mild and submissive tone, "If I shall find favor in the eyes of the LORD, HE will bring me back again, and show me both it and HIS habitation; but if HE thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I; let HIM do to me as seemeth good unto HIM." [2d Sam. xv: 25-26].

Ah! my friends, it shows a true and repentant spirit, when one can thus commit his cause to a good and gracious God. But there is no end of trouble. As

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\*The Rev. J. A. Spencer, D. D., in his "Sketches of Travel in Egypt and the Holy Land," p. 300, brings up this scene afresh, while describing the steep and stony path into the valley of Jehoshaphat.



the aged monarch, with sorrowing heart, went on his weary way, a despicable wretch, Shimei by name, "of the family of Saul," [2d Samuel xvi: 5], dogged his steps with taunting and scornful words, and cast stones at David and his friends; and when one of the royal guard asked leave to hurl a javelin at the miscreant's head, the request was positively refused. And to show that David's meekness and forbearance was not assumed for one occasion only, but that they were ruling principles of his life, we ought in justice here to say, that at the end of the war, when the king came back in triumph, the contemptible and cringing Shimei was the first to crouch before the king and offer a pitiable prayer for mercy; and that he heard from the injured David's lips, the gracious and undeserved assurance, "Thou shalt not die." [2d Samuel xix: 23]. How glorious and godlike is it to forgive! Although we have been obliged to reveal some dreadful facts in David's checkered life, we shall find ourselves well and actively employed in following his example in the many particulars which are praiseworthy and good.

But we must not go too fast. David's last penal sorrow is bursting upon his head. He is paying dearly for having lavished his affection in an immoderate degree upon his favorite child, and forbearing to employ the corrective system which such a disposition as Absalom's required. This wicked and unnatural son had weaned the hearts of the people from their lawful king, by the deceitful promise, that if they would aid him in driving David from the throne, he would rule them with more just and easy sway. A

great battle was fought between the followers of the king and the insurgents under Absalom, in the wood of Ephraim. But even when David had been so outrageously abused, he sat in trembling suspense, hoping, that when the messengers came back with tidings from the field of fight, they might bring the grateful assurance that Absalom was safe. Every child remembers with interest, the strange and unusual way in which this hard-hearted youth came to his premature death. Alas! is not the foolish, doating father, reaping bitter fruits from the grievous wickedness of other days?

Absalom was slain. We have no tears to shed for him. But not so with the aged father.

"The pall was settled, he who slept beneath  
Was straighten'd for the grave; and, as the folds  
Sunk to the still proportions, they betray'd  
The matchless symmetry of Absalom.

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His helm was at his feet; his banner, soiled  
With trailing through Jerusalem, was laid,  
Reversed, beside him.

The soldiers of the King trod to and fro,  
Clad in the garb of battle, and their chief,  
The mighty Joab, stood beside the bier,  
And gazed upon the dark pall steadfastly,  
As if he feared the slumberer might stir.

A slow step startled him. He grasp'd his blade  
As if a trumpet rang; but the bent form  
Of David enter'd, and he gave command,  
In a low tone, to his few followers—  
And left him with his dead. The King stood still  
Till the last echo died; then, throwing off  
The sack-cloth from his brow, and laying back  
The pall from the still features of his child,

He bow'd his head upon him, and broke forth  
 In the resistless eloquence of woe,  
 'O, my son, Absalom! my son, my son Absalom!  
 Would God I had died for thee, O, Absalom, my son, my  
 son!'—WILLIS.

Was not the terrible threatening come to pass, which must have caused David's ears to tingle, when the prophet uttered it at the first? "Behold I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine own house."\*

Amidst the melting influences of such a scene as that just now described, we feel almost like retracting some of the hard things which we have said of David when his wilful wickedness forced every right feeling of the heart to rise up in just displeasure. We look with compassion upon thy wrinkled brow and furrowed cheeks, and gushing tears, thou man of many griefs; but, David, it is only the wages of thy sin. All this

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\*Returning to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and passing along its eastern side, we came to the great burying ground of the Jews. \* \* \* The tomb of Absalom is a single stone, as large as an ordinary two-story house, and ornamented with twenty-four semi-columns of the Doric order, supporting a triangular pyramidal top. The top is battered and defaced: no pilgrim, whether Jew or Christian, ever passes through the valley of Jehoshaphat without casting a stone at the sepulchre of the rebellious son. No entrance to this sepulchre has ever been discovered; and the only way of getting into the interior is by a hole broken for the purpose in one of the sides. [Stephen's Travels in Egypt, Arabia, and the Holy Land, vol. ii, p. 171. See also Dr. Robinson's Biblical Researches, vol. i, p. 236]. The Pillar of Absalom which is said to have been erected to the rebellious and unfortunate, yet loved and lamented child of David, is a monolith cut out from the rock. [2d Sam. xviii: 18]. The structure bears upon it traces of a mixture of Doric, Ionic, and Egyptian architecture. Whether these indicate its true origin, or were cut upon its solid front in after days, cannot be certainly determined. [Odenheimer's Jerusalem and its Vicinity, p. 57].

suffering was purchased by deeds of which humanity should be heartily ashamed.

Some captious inquirer will be waiting for a favorable opportunity to ask, "How can a man led astray by evil passions like those of David, be regarded as a pattern of virtue, and be honored by the distinguished appellation of the man after GOD's own heart?"

We frankly answer, that we by no means consider him as being such a perfect example, and the conclusion which is so often drawn from the title of honor bestowed upon him, is entirely gratuitous. "The chief design of GOD in separating the Jewish nation from the rest of mankind, was to perpetuate the knowledge of HIMSELF by means of this peculiar people, and to preserve the worship of the one true GOD amidst an idolatrous world. \* \* \* Whoever, therefore, exerted himself vigorously and effectively in promoting this great end of the Jewish theocracy, might, with the strictest propriety, be called a man after GOD's own heart, because he acted in conformity to the main purpose of GOD's heart; he did the very thing that GOD wanted to have done; he forwarded the grand design he had in view. Now this was precisely the character of David, the distinguished excellence of his life. He was a sincere and hearty lover of his country, a zealous observer of its laws, in opposition to all idolatry. It was not, therefore, on account of his private virtues, but his public conduct, that David was honored with the name of the man after GOD's own heart." [Bishop Porteus' Sermons, p. 293]. Thus much in answer to this difficulty.

Again, the question might be very fairly put, "Why should David be required to suffer such heavy chastisements at GOD'S hands, even after he had sincerely repented, and had been freely pardoned?"

The reply has already been anticipated, in part. In addition to what was said before, however, we may properly remark that the example of the king of Israel would be very great, either for good or evil, and that hence the honor of GOD absolutely required that the violation of HIS holy laws should be punished in the sight of all the people.

Unless we repent and forsake our sins, even the Gospel of mercy offers us no hope. And if people will persist in doing wrong, they must receive for the wrong they do, and be smitten with the rod of discipline, which is wielded by a FATHER'S hand. A closing lesson now from the text itself; "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Has no parent, here, good reason to be anxious, as David was, about some wayward, disobedient son? A child who has not only grieved a father's heart by stubbornness, and perverseness, and sin, but who is showing a daily contempt for GOD and HIS holy Church; scorning his father's Church, and his father's GOD? It is greatly to be feared that there are many such.

Now it becomes all parents, thus vexed and sorrowing, anxiously to inquire whether there be not some grievous sin committed in the past, and still unrepented of and unforgiven, for which this heavy punishment is following them about. With a sincere desire

for the good of such an undutiful son, and with a proper regard, also, to your own comfort and peace, you should ask with David, "Is the young man safe?" and, if not, "Can I do anything to make him so?"

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## SERMON LVIII.

### LONGING FOR THE WATER OF THE WELL OF BETHLEHEM.

[TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate.—2d SAMUEL xxiii. 15.

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WHEN Sir Philip Sidney, who flourished in the days of Queen Elizabeth, lay mortally wounded on the battle-field, he called for a cup of water to quench his painful thirst. The cup was brought, and he had already raised it to his feverish lips, when his eye rested upon a poor, dying soldier, who watched with eagerness the cooling draught which the other was about to take. The noble man forgot his own death-thirst, and passing the dripping vessel to his fainting comrade, said, "Drink it friend; thy necessities are greater than mine!" What a picture some skilful painter might make of such a scene! But the history connected with the text will furnish another subject, no less worthy of being thus portrayed.

The scene opens on a field of strife, within sight of Bethlehem. King David and his brave associates are

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resting from their toils. Between the camp of Israel and the town of Bethlehem, the Philistines, bristling with armor, are drawn up in hostile array. Both parties are prepared at a moment's warning, to renew the fight; but both are glad to have a breathing spell, before the struggle for the mastery shall again begin. Weary and languid, from the efforts already made, David bethinks him of that cool, sparkling well "by the gate" of Bethlehem, from which he had so often drank in his boyish days. Without reflecting what the consequences might be, he breathed forth the passionate wish: "Oh! that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate." He forgets that a hostile and dangerous foe is encamped between the forces of Israel and the well of whose refreshing waters he desires so much to taste. It does not occur to him that it could only be reached by forcing a passage through the Philistine ranks, and that even one cup of water might cost the price of blood. David does not remember this, and while he issues no direct command that the perilous attempt should be made, he expresses a desire that water might be brought.

Three of his most distinguished officers heard his earnest words. With them the wish of their leader was equal to a command. They wait for no order from his lips, but seizing their weapons, they rush forth with impetuous haste, and, striking with manly blows upon the right and left, they carve a passage through the opposing ranks. They reach the well, and filling a helmet with the crystal waters, they



hasten back, again beat off the hostile troops, who rise to oppose their steps, and, amidst the admiring shouts of their countrymen, they regain the camp, and present the coveted water to the king. David seizes the vessel with eager hands and longs to convey it to his lips. He beholds the water, and, though fresh and pure, it looks to him like blood. Sober reason has regained her seat, and he feels a just compunction, that an unguarded wish had caused three noble men to place their lives in such fearful peril. He cannot consent to be refreshed with the water purchased at such a rate. He denies himself a gratification which he prizes so much, and with solemn deliberation, poured the water on the ground as an offering to the LORD. We blame those three captains, and yet there is much to admire in what they did. Had their king commanded them to go, it would have been their duty, as good soldiers, to obey. But he had simply given utterance to a wish. They could not have been found fault with had they paid no attention to it. No doubt there was water enough in the camp to supply all needful wants. It was quite too much that they should risk their lives for the gratification of an inconsiderate desire. Water from other sources might have quenched the king's thirst as well as that from the well of Bethlehem.

At the same time, we cannot but admit that the three captains were actuated by a high and noble spirit.

Would to GOD that not only in the discharge of the various obligations of life, but also in the performance of higher duties to the SUPREME BEING, that more

persons might be found by whom the expression of a wish from one entitled to obedience, might have all the effect of a command! Alas, how much of "eye-service" is to be discovered in the conduct of thousands; an eye-service which gladly shirks from duty, instead of looking out for occasions to practice it.

My Christian friends, even when engaged in the service of our GOD, are we not too often disposed to turn aside from the performance of some act becoming our character as children of GOD, simply on the ground that it has not been commanded, in so many words, when we are perfectly satisfied that such an act would be most acceptable unto HIM?

The three devoted warriors who made their way, at such hazards, to the well of Bethlehem, had not been told to go. They merely knew that it would gratify their monarch to taste of the refreshing water.

What an example do they set to every soldier of CHRIST, in this act of heroic daring! Whenever we would excuse ourselves from making a sacrifice for our HEAVENLY MASTER; whenever a desire of ease and self-indulgence would tempt us to forego the performance of a duty, merely because it is enforced by no positive command; it will be well for us to recall this lesson which has been set before us to-day.

We have spoken, thus far, of the conduct of David's three captains. It is time that something should be said of the conduct of David himself. He must have had evidences, on former occasions, to convince him of the devoted attachment of his subordinates, and, therefore, it became him to be most careful not to test

their ready obedience on occasions of trifling moment. Good and judicious persons, who occupy the position of superiors, whether it be as the head of the family, or the principal of a school, or the commander of an army, or the governor of a state or a nation, should adopt this rule of conduct, to be very careful that the commands which they issue are judicious; and "the greater the known readiness to comply with their wishes the greater should be the caution that those wishes be always reasonable and just."

It would certainly have been much more in keeping with the character of a good soldier, whose whole career is supposed to be one of hardness and exposure, had David been satisfied to quench his thirst with the water which had been provided for his associates. It is no excuse for him to say that in an hour of weariness and lassitude, he was living over again, as in a dream, the days of childhood, and recalled with grateful satisfaction the refreshing image of the well by the gate of Bethlehem. Had he kept such contemplations to himself; there would have been nothing to blame in him, but when he so far forgets himself as to give utterance to a wish which could only be gratified at the risk of human life, we cease to sympathize with him, and our feelings of respect well nigh give place to contempt. Indeed, he must have despised himself, when, with almost childish thoughtlessness, he had expressed a desire for water from his favorite well, he saw the three devoted captains hastening over the plains, as though they had been entrusted with a commission of vast moment; when he beheld

the formidable front which the Philistines presented to them ; and when, at last, breathless and exhausted from the unwonted effort, they presented the water which had been brought from the well under circumstances so appalling.

You might say, as an apology for David, that he gave no command, and that the warriors were not obliged to go. True, but he knew that so great was their regard for himself, and so anxious were they to gratify his every desire, that his passionate exclamation, "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!" would be enough to prompt them to any effort to satisfy his longings, however inconvenient and dangerous. We have brought out the fact in this strong light, in order that each of us may answer for himself, whether we have been guilty of no such want of consideration and kindness towards those who may be subjected to our control. Has no one in a subordinate capacity, whether child, or pupil, constituent or servant, been obliged to take some unnecessary and painful step, and even to put health and life in jeopardy, to gratify an unreasonable and selfish whim of ours? The question may never have presented itself in such a shape to you before, but a moment's consideration will convince you that it is not a trifling nor unimportant one. Life is made up of small matters, when taken one by one; but the whole, when counted together, form a serious array. But as in the conduct of the three warriors, we found something to praise and blame, so in the conduct of the king, whom they were so anxious to serve, there was something to redeem his character from unmitigated reproach. We can

readily picture to ourselves the appearance of David, when the cup was presented to him, containing the water which he had longed for with such inconsiderate craving. Fresh, and clear, and sparkling as it was, he turned from it with loathing. It seemed to him like the blood of the devoted men, who had gone for it at the peril of their lives. Well might he lay down the vessel, and say, in words of sorrow and self-reproach, "Be it far from me, O LORD, that I should do this!"

Instead of arguing, as he could, that he had not commanded the captains to venture upon such a perilous errand, and that it would be poor return for their warm and affectionate attachment, if he should refuse to drink what they had taken such pains to furnish; instead of arguing in this way, he poured the water upon the ground, an offering to the LORD, as an acknowledgment of his sin, and that some atonement was needed to wash its guilt away. We find it hard to recognize the youthful hero who once bade defiance to the mighty Goliath of Gath, in the weary king, exclaiming in words of mournful complaint, "Oh, that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate." But there is another occasion in David's life, when, forgetful of the wants of the body, and mindful only of the longings of the soul, he cried out, with still greater earnestness, "Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after THEE, O GOD. My soul is athirst for GOD, yea, even for the living GOD; when shall I come to appear before the presence of GOD?" [Psalms xlii: 1-2].

As the poor hart in the droughts of summer hastens through the burning desert that it may quench its thirst, and cool its weary limbs in the flowing brooks, "so does the loving soul long, and call, and hasten unto HIM who is the fount of love. In the wilderness of this mortal life, while the spirit is away from grace and from the GIVER of grace, it thirsts and wearies for HIM whose are the living waters of holy baptism, and the refreshing cup of Holy Communion." [Plain Commentary on the Psalms, vol. i, p. 283].

Bishop Wainwright, in his beautiful book of travels in Palestine, speaks of having drank from the well near the gate of Bethlehem, for whose refreshing waters the fainting David so earnestly pined. All this may remind us, my friends, of ONE who was born in this same Bethlehem, and who says to each way-worn pilgrim in the journey of life, "If any man thirst, let him come unto ME, and drink." [St. John vii: 37]. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." [St. John iv: 14]. The early fathers of the Church were fond of looking for hidden meanings, under those places in Scripture which might seem at first to have merely a simple historical import. They would not pass over the incident in David's life, upon which we have been commenting to-day, without a thorough and careful sifting. And surely, it "were not difficult to give a parabolic character to the occurrences, and to imagine them ordered with a view to David's instruction. If water is to be fetched

from the well of Bethlehem, it must be with the discomfiture of a vast host of foes; three unite in the purpose, and overbear all opponents. And if 'living water' is to be brought to those who lie parched on the moral desert of the earth, indeed it can only be with the defeat of mightier than the Philistines; principality and power withstand the endeavor; who shall prevail in so great an enterprise? Three must combine; it is not a work for any one person, even though divine; but three shall unite to strike down the adversaries, and bring the draught of life to the perishing; and if the cup come apparently in the hand of but one of the three, the other two shall have been equally instrumental in procuring the blessing."\*

"And David longed, and said, Oh! that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!" Whether we consider the text as referring to our bodily wants, alone, or as implying, also, an anxious desire after GOD's refreshing grace, for the fainting soul; how consoling to remember that better world; the believer's eternal home, where GOD's redeemed children "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the LAMB which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water." [Rev. vii: 16-17].

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\*Melville's Sermons, vol. ii, p. 6. It is proper to add that many of the thoughts in this Sermon are borrowed from the same source. Those who are familiar with the majestic march of Melville's sentences, will perceive that the style is not such as that distinguished preacher would care to claim.

## SERMON LIX.

### DAVID NUMBERING THE PEOPLE.

[TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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And David's heart smote him, after that he had numbered the people.—2d SAMUEL xxiv. 10.

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ONLY a few scenes are left, in the closing years of David's life; but these are too important to be passed over without notice. At the end of the memorable civil war which had been planned and carried on by the renegade Absalom, peace was again restored, and the king was more firmly seated than ever upon the throne.

But the sunshine of returning prosperity had hardly begun to gladden and revive his heart, before the clouds of adversity thickened and lowered; the precursors of fresh vengeance from heaven. For three years' space, the Israelites suffered from a grievous famine, [2d Samuel xx: 1]; and when David, in alarm and anguish, inquired the cause, an oracular response from the ALMIGHTY declared it to be a judicial consequence of the wrongs which Saul had done to the Gibeonites. These people, as you will remember, were

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some of the original inhabitants who had enjoyed possession of the land long before the arrival of the Israelites, but whom GOD, on account of their abominable idolatries, had determined to destroy. By craft and falsehood, the Gibeonites obtained an oath of preservation from Joshua; but after he discovered the trick which had been practiced upon him, although he felt obliged to fulfill his solemn promise, he condemned them to be "hewers of wood, and drawers of water" for the congregation, all their days.\* [Joshua ix: 23]. During four hundred years, they and their descendants patiently endured the bondage which they had thus brought upon themselves, and perhaps they would have continued to do so, in uncomplaining silence, had it not been for the perfidy of Saul, who broke the agreement which Joshua had made, and persecuted and destroyed great numbers of them. Strange as it may seem, there can be little doubt that this miserable man, persuaded himself that he was doing a very praiseworthy act. He had once suffered under GOD's displeasure, because he spared the Amalekites, whom he had been commanded to exterminate, and now he was so anxious to make up for his remissness on that occasion, that he levelled his misguided zeal against all the enemies of Israel, and especially against the defenceless Gibeonites.

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\*It cannot be doubted but the Gibeonites, being permitted to preserve their lives and property on condition of becoming "hewers of wood, and drawers of water, for the congregation, and for the altar of the Lord," must have renounced idolatry; for the attendance of avowed idolaters at the altar for any purpose would have been an intolerable profanation. [Graves on Pentateuch, p. 343].

How perfectly natural this was! Observe, we do not say how right, but how strictly in accordance with the promptings of an unrenewed heart, and a conscience clouded by sin! It is one of the most common things in the world for people to try to atone for one evil deed by committing another.

Nearly forty years passed away before the guilty ones were punished. But although it would have seemed probable from this long delay, that GOD had forgotten, the unjust and murderous offence was fresh in HIS remembrance. "Because sentence against an evil is not executed speedily," [Eccles. viii: 11], the wicked are often led to hope that they are perfectly safe. Ah! it is the security of those who are sleeping near the treacherous crater of a volcano. But why this long delay? Why was not the cruel slaughter of the Gibeonites speedily avenged? Perhaps Saul had already received his full share of punishment. "His bloody house," as they are called, [2d Samuel xxi], the partners of his perfidy and murder, must have their turn. [Memoirs of Lord Teignmouth, p. 233]. Thus parents may entail misery upon their posterity. GOD does visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, even unto the third and fourth generation.

We are all suffering, to this day, the sad effects of Adam's disobedience. Every one must have observed how the children of the intemperate and licentious endure many miseries for their fathers' sake. Viewed in this light, the very delay in the punishment of the house of Saul, is a most fearful warning. We are now to see David, once more, in his old character as a warrior.

The Philistines, with whom, in boyhood, he had begun the unequal contest, were still obstinate and unsubdued.

Although they had met with so many discouraging reverses, they continued to show their hatred for the true GOD by making assaults upon his people, and on this occasion, headed by a general of gigantic size, who had gained for himself an honorable name in war, they went forth, confident of success. David, advanced in years, and broken down by sorrow and misfortune, buckled on his armor afresh, and fought with the powerful son of the terrible Goliath; a man so conspicuous in sacred story.

In spite of the anxious remonstrances of friends, the aged monarch continued to fight the LORD'S battles, and expose himself to great fatigue and danger, until the four descendants of Goliath were destroyed, and the Philistines were brought to a state of complete submission.

In a spiritual sense, all this should be realized in the life of every true servant of GOD. The zealous, devoted Christian is a soldier. He too contends against a terrible giant, the monster sin. The feeblest child may come off triumphant, who will go forth in the strength of the LORD GOD, and make mention of His righteousness only.

But one successful contest will by no means suffice. There is little rest for the Christian on this side of the grave. The great CAPTAIN of our salvation is constantly repeating the warning and the promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown."

of life." [Revelation ii: 16]. As David, though aged and infirm, was called upon to contend with the same fierce enemies whose assaults had disturbed his earlier days, so also, with the soldier of the cross; and as he was sustained alike, in youth and age, by GOD's almighty arm, so, for the encouragement of every faithful believer, the kind assurance has been given, "Even to your old age I am HE; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. I have made and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you." [Isaiah xlii: 4]. Here we must shift the scene again, and bring before you a circumstance which is very remarkable, on more accounts than one. The children of Israel were now at peace. The toils and dangers of war were forgotten—nay, worse than this; they who had received so many signal proofs of GOD's goodness, began to be grievously unmindful of HIM. Former experience had prepared us to look out for fresh judgments from heaven. These make their appearance this time in a most unusual way.

As there is an apparent contradiction between what is said in the Second Book of Samuel on this subject, and the record in the First of Chronicles, we shall place the two passages side by side, that we may see the whole difficulty in its full force. We read, in the twenty-fourth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel, "And again the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and HE moved David against them to say, Go number Israel and Judah." Then, again, in the twenty-first chapter of the First Book of Chronicles, we are told, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel."

This has always been a favorite point with infidels. "See how the Bible contradicts itself," they scoffingly exclaim; "here, in one place, it is distinctly said that the LORD moved David to number the tribes of Israel, and in another that Satan induced him to do it. Which statement is correct?"

Let us be calm, my unbelieving friend, and face the difficulty bravely, if difficulty there be. Every one who is acquainted with the Bible, knows that it is very common for the sacred writers to represent the ALMIGHTY as doing that which, in the ordinary course of providence, HE allows to be done, so that this single consideration would make everything plain and satisfactory; but, according to the original Hebrew, we are not required to believe that David was tempted to commit this offence, either by GOD or by Satan. The word Satan, though often used in reference to that fallen angel who is the great enemy and adversary of our race, signifies only, in general, an adversary; and, therefore, we may very properly read the passage in the First Book of Chronicles, thus: "An adversary stood up against Israel, and excited David." For all that we know, this adversary may have been some counsellor or adviser, about the royal court.

The other passage, [2d Samuel xxiv], may, with equal propriety, be rendered, "The anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and one excited David, [i. e. the person mentioned in Chronicles], saying, Go, number Israel." [Letters on Infidelity, by Bp. Horne, Episcopal Press, 1831, p. 508-9]. We do not know, certainly, what motive prompted the king to take this

census of the people. "It is probable, however, that he coveted an extensive empire, and having through the suggestions of an adversary, given way to this evil disposition, he could not well look to GOD for help, and, therefore, wished to know whether the thousands of Israel and Judah might be deemed equal to the conquest which he meditated. His design was to force all the Israelites to perform military service, and engage in the contest which his ambition had in view; and as the people might resist this census, soldiers were employed to make it who might not only put down resistance, but also suppress disturbances that might arise." [Horne's Introduction, vol. i, p. 417].

The whole scheme, whatever it may have been, was so manifestly opposed to the will of GOD, that even the fierce and head-strong Joab did his best to dissuade David from attempting it. But reasoning and remonstrance were alike in vain, and the great undertaking was recklessly begun. The business of making the census\* had already occupied more than nine months, when the iniquitous proceeding was suddenly stopped. [2d Samuel xxiv: 8-9].

O foolish king, one would have thought that you had already endured trouble enough, without obliging the ALMIGHTY to pour fresh bitterness into your cup!

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\* It is a curious fact, that when John Graunt, "Citizen of London," engaged, in 1662, in determining the population of that great metropolis, he felt a good deal of hesitation himself, from a reluctance to transgress the strict letter of the Scriptural prohibition against numbering the people, "and his fellow-citizens never forgave him for this offensive piece of heresy."—[London Quarterly Review, July, 1859, p. 34].

But, my friends, let us be slow in our condemnation of others. GOD is forced to punish some of us with many stripes. HE speaketh once, yea twice, while men regard it not. It was left to David's choice, as to what the punishment should be; whether seven years of famine, or three month's flight before the enemy, or three days of pestilence. The king wisely preferred to leave his case to the merciful disposal of GOD; and so, as the least of the evils, "a pestilence" was sent "upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed: and there died of the people—seventy thousand men." [2d Samuel xxiv: 15]. Prince and people both had sinned, therefore both must suffer. It is true, that David with a generous forgetfulness of self, besought the LORD that all the vengeance might fall upon himself, and that the people might be spared; but Israel had wilfully offended against the MOST HIGH, and they had no right to expect to escape. Some light will be thrown upon the nature of the sin of which David was guilty, in numbering the people, by a passage in the Book of Exodus, [chap. xxx: 12], where such a census of the nation is spoken of, not as a mere enumeration to gratify pride or curiosity, but as a religious rite, by which their moral condition was to be determined. And when, after such a scrutiny, evil practices should be discovered, a ransom was to be paid, that there might be no plague among them.

Joab appears to have anticipated the very visitation which followed; the judgment threatened in this part of the law of Moses. So then, David's offence was most wilful and wicked. His proposed census had no

reference to repentance, or discipline, but was merely prompted by vain glory.

The king must have waited in fearful suspense, the determination of the ALMIGHTY as to what his punishment should be. "Under what shape," (to borrow another's words), "must vengeance come that it may touch him most closely, and most clearly prove by what it is provoked? You will admit at once that, forasmuch as it was the thought of having many subjects, by which David had been puffed up, the most suitable punishment was the destruction of thousands of those subjects, for this took away the source of exaltation, and stripped the boastful king of the strength on which he vain-gloriously rested. Had not the plague been stayed before the fixed time expired; had it been allowed to destroy, at the same rate throughout the three days, it appears there must have perished full a third of those whom Joab had numbered; as it was, there fell seventy thousand men — no inconsiderable part of such a population as Israel. Certainly this was adapting the penalty to the fault; for not only was David punished, but punished by an act of retributive justice, from which himself and others might learn what it was which had displeased the ALMIGHTY. If we recur to the cases which we adduced, as bearing close similarity to that of David, when numbering his people, we shall see the punishment was precisely that which the nature of the crime suggested and demanded. The monied man, who counts up with complacency his accumulation of property, and takes the sum of his possessions with



the same motive and the same feeling as the king of Israel took the sum of his subjects, what would be, in his case, the most appropriate visitation? what the exact retribution? Unquestionably that his boasted wealth should melt away; that the riches which he had proudly reckoned up, and vainly thought of increasing, should suddenly diminish, as though the ALMIGHTY, according to his own words, had "blown on them and scattered them." Or the intellectual man, who parades, with undisguised satisfaction, the powers of his reason, marshalling the acuteness, and the strength, and the penetration of his mind, and all with the intent of proving his own sufficiency for moral enterprise and discovery; how shall he be most fitly punished, if not by the weakening and discomfiture of those very faculties which have ministered to his pride? What will teach him so sensibly and so appropriately as the making or proving feeble those intellectual resources, his confidence in which has induced a contempt of the disclosures of revelation and the assistance of grace? And if, in these cases, the punishment could be most severe, and, at the same time, most strictly retributive, which should be directed against the object of the pride and the confidence by which GOD had been displeased, shall not the same be confessed in the instance of David, when the pestilence swept away his subjects, and thus thinned the multitude on which he had looked with sinful exultation?" [Golden Lectures, for 1852]. In the midst of wrath, GOD remembers mercy. While the terrible pestilence was sweeping onward with its

scorching breath, "the LORD repented HIM of the evil," and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; stay now thy hand." Terror and despair gave place to joy and thanksgiving, and David "built there an altar unto the LORD and offered burnt offerings and peace offering." [2d Samuel xxiv: 25]. On the same spot, long years afterwards, CHRIST JESUS, the one true sacrifice, was offered upon the cross. The plague of sin, which otherwise must have destroyed us all, has thus been stayed, and the gracious GOD, who then became reconciled unto David, is ready to give us His blessing. Let us all betake ourselves, then, to repentance and earnest prayer.

## SERMON LX.

### SETTING ONE'S HOUSE IN ORDER.

[TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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So David slept with his fathers.—1st KINGS ii. 10.

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THE shadows are deepening. We are now drawing nigh the end. David's days of activity are over, and we are soon to stand by his bed, and watch his departure from earth. Almost every one, unless a martyr to painful disease, has a desire to live long, and few would acknowledge that they are ready to die; and yet, the season of old age, if attended by loss of our various faculties and impaired health, is anything but a time of enjoyment.

"The silver livery of advised age" commands respect, and, if crippled by infirmities, calls forth compassion; but "the hoary head is only a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness." [Proverbs xvi: 31].

When he had reached the age of seventy, David began, with more earnestness than before, to prepare for his coming change; a change upon which such

important destinies depend. But even then, when every additional effort must have cost him still greater exhaustion and fatigue, and every fresh trouble weighed more heavily upon him, he could secure no rest nor respite for his days of weakness and imbecility. That awful curse of evil from his own house; a curse which he had so richly merited, broke out afresh, and David was taught, in a new and painful lesson, how evil and bitter a thing is sin.

His son Adonijah, with strange contempt for his father's sacred rights, rudely crowded the old man from the throne; and those friends who had defended David's cause so manfully before, now joined the usurper's ranks. Among these, we are almost ashamed to say, were Joab, the invincible and brave, and Abiathar, the priest. [1st Kings i: 7].\*

At this critical moment, the prophet Nathan, who knew what promise had been made to Bathsheba, with reference to Solomon, her son, reminded her of this, and she accordingly claimed the fulfillment of these pledges at David's hands.

So Zadok, the priest, was called, and the young man anointed king. Then the rebels came in haste to throw down their arms, and swear fealty to the rising power.

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\*The scene described in the sacred story will be brought back with still greater distinctness to every reader's mind, who will refer to "Notes of Travel in the East," p. 185, by Dr. Dorr, Rector of Christ Church, Philadelphia. To show how well one is repaid for a careful study of the Bible, it will be only necessary to turn to "Blunt's Undesigned Coincidences," Carter's edition, p. 160, a book well worth having.

"Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die." [1st Kings ii]. What a change since the shepherd boy, then so "ruddy and of a fair countenance," had taken his sling in his hand, and hastened to meet the Philistine in single combat. All that is left of David, the youthful champion, the poet, the king, is this feeble, dim-eyed old man, who is about to resign the sceptre to his son.

When the stupifying effects of disease, or the no less fearful ravings of insanity, unfit one to realize, or to be alarmed at the approach of death, of course there will be perfect indifference on the subject. But it may well be doubted whether any person in his sober senses ever meditates upon this great event without very solemn feelings, and not unfrequently with those akin to dread.

Thus, we hear David exclaim, in one of his own Psalms, "My heart is disquieted within me, and the fear of death is fallen upon me." [Lv. 4].

Sometimes there will be most gloomy forebodings of the agonies of death, even when we feel quite confident of rest and security after that narrow sea has been safely crossed.

But David knew that he had something more important to do, than to spend the short remnant of life in unavailing speculations as to how much bodily suffering he should be required to undergo.

So far as that matter is concerned, a sharp toothache, or a chronic rheumatism, are often far worse than the pains of death itself. If we are prepared to go, all things else are of small moment.

The king of Israel, after a long and glorious reign of forty years, began to "set his house in order," that no unnecessary vexations might arise in the kingdom, and that he might do those things which were just and right towards GOD and man.

We must live good lives, if we wish to die in peace. Nothing else can atone for the loss of this. The highest flights of genius, the proudest achievements of the warrior, all that man can accomplish by the most diligent improvement of his powers, will afford the soul no comfort in a dying hour, unless peace has been made with GOD, through the merits and intercession of our adorable REDEEMER.

One of David's great faults had been a foolish indulgence of his children; an indulgence which was the direct cause of many evils to them and to himself.

This, therefore, was the first error which he now strove to correct, and you may discover how anxious he felt upon the subject, by reading the solemn charge which he addressed to his son Solomon. [1st Kings ii].

My friends, if you have any regard for your own happiness, and the well-being of your children, do not wait until your dying hour before they hear from your lips sound and wholesome advice, and discover in your lives an example which they may safely follow.

Having carefully and conscientiously arranged his domestic duties, David next called together the princes, and nobles, and commanders of Israel, [1st Chronicles xxviii: 29], and declared to them, in tender and affecting words, the goodness of the ALMIGHTY to him

and his, and commended the kingdom to the holy keeping of Abraham's God.

Moreover, he spoke of the fond desire of his heart, which, for years past, had occupied his thoughts; the desire of building a glorious temple to the honor of God's name. He laid before the dignitaries of the court the plans for this temple, as he had received them by direct inspiration from heaven, and intrusted to them, as his executors, the immense wealth collected for the sacred purpose, which Solomon was permitted to accomplish.

If men have accumulated property during their lives, they will generally give directions in their wills that it may be divided among their children, after they themselves, have lost all control over the matter. But how few are wise, like David, in leaving something which shall be for the glory of God, and for the good of generations yet unborn.

Suppose that, instead of providing for the building of the temple, the dying monarch had followed the usual course of the world, and left everything to his children. If able to look back from another state of being, upon the troubled course of this mortal life, he would have seen his sons rioting in extravagance and dissipation, because an ample fortune having been given them, there was no incentive left for honorable exertion; while his daughters, if they did not squander his hard-earned treasure in finery and fashion, would be found the slaves of indifferent or dissolute husbands, who having sought such alliances from selfish and unworthy motives, could neither be expected to cherish love, nor practice forbearance.

Give the ALMIGHTY HIS share of the property entrusted to your stewardship, if you wish your children to be happy. Nothing which is wrongfully kept back from HIM, will be of advantage to those who inherit it.

It always affords a peculiar satisfaction to the survivors, to treasure up the last words which are spoken by the dying. The farewell testimony of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, was this: "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and HIS word was in my tongue. The GOD of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of GOD. And he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear sunshine after rain. Although my house be not so with GOD; yet HE hath made me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although HE make it not to grow." [2d Samuel xxiii: 2-5].

Here is a plain and unqualified expression of David's faith;\* faith in the influence of GOD's Holy Spirit, and faith in the MESSIAH's coming.

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\*The language of divine faith is stronger and firmer even when deep calls unto deep, and most certainly determines that it will not be in vain; and therefore, in the forty-second Psalm, not dubious and trembling, but with a steady voice, he silences all the noisy tumults of an agitated mind, and says, Repose thyself on GOD, for I shall still praise HIM. Or, as it may be rendered, I am going to praise HIM. Amid all those tempests which rage about me, I am thinking of that hymn of praise which I shall pay to HIM for my deliverance, and for the happy exit out of all my sorrows. Though at present we have nothing in sight but darkness, and whirlwinds, and rocks, and the raging, foaming sea, let the skill and power of the GREAT PILOT be



"The chamber where the good man meets his fate," is the place in which we may behold the manifestations of GOD'S grace, in soothing the mind and changing the heart; in plucking away the sting of death, and opening wide the gates to everlasting glory. Who that has been permitted to witness such a scene, has not breathed the fervent prayer, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like His!" [Numbers xxiii: 10].

The Bible gives us no particulars about David's funeral; but Josephus (who is high authority in such matters), mentions that "he was buried by his son Solomon, in Jerusalem, with great magnificence." [Antiq. vol. vii, chap. xv: 3; also, Antiq. vol. xiii, chap. vii: 4].

Even so late as St. Peter's time, as we find in the book of Acts [ii: 29], his sepulchre\* was still in existence; and another authority informs us that "a part of the royal mausoleum fell down in the Emperor

opposed to all these. And what the Psalmist says elsewhere of sailors, may evidently be applied to those who go down into the sea; they gain this by their dangers, that they see the works of this GREAT PILOT in the abyss, and contemplate His wonders in the deep, and he who gives himself up to His care, and fixes his eye and hope wholly on HIM, though he be, or rather seems to be, shipwrecked, and lose all his goods; yet if he does not make shipwreck of faith, he loses nothing that is properly his own. Nay, when he is swallowed up in the abyss of death, he does not perish, but swims through it to the further shore of eternity, where he finds a banquet, a palace prepared for him, and a kingdom that cannot be moved, but remains to endless ages. [Leighton's Works, p. 372].

\*Maundrell's Travels, p. 76, Stanley's Palestine, p. 147, and Thompson's "The Land and the Book," vol. ii, p. 477.

Adrian's reign," [Calmet, p. 331], about one hundred and twenty years after our SAVIOUR'S birth.\*

The burial-place of so uncommon a man as David ought certainly to have been marked by an appropriate monument; but Solomon did not display his accustomed wisdom in the lavish expenditure bestowed upon his father's tomb.

Money can be much more profitably spent than in costly grave-stones. Indeed, we are disposed to think that the Armenian priests acted for the best, when, finding it impossible to obtain suitable materials for the erection of a Church, they instructed the people to bring together the tomb-stones of their ancestors, and devote them to the sacred purpose. [Curzon's Travels in Armenia, p. 49-50].

The lesson which we should learn is this: that we ought to give much more than we do to the cause of true religion, for this will always be a safe investment, and one, the benefit of which, we shall never fail to reap.

Money may secure for any one, fulsome flatteries, engraved on the purest marble, to be read and ridiculed by men; while acts of charity, done in faith and love, will be remembered and rewarded by GOD at the great day of final account.

We close our simple record of the principal incidents in David's life, by a passage from one who had

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\*Some things about the posterity of David will be found in Mosheim's "Historical Commentaries," vol. i, p. 143, and Burton's "Eccl. History," p. 256, 277, and 301.

studied the writings of the poet king with unwonted diligence and care.

“When we view the man after GOD’s own heart; taking GOD for his portion, associating with his people, and feeding upon his word; when we mark his zeal for his MASTER’S glory; his devotedness and self-denial in his MASTER’S work; when we see him ever ready to confess his name, to bear his reproach, and caring only to answer it by a more steady adherence to his service; do we not, in those lineaments of character, recognize the picture of one who, in after times, could turn to the Churches of CHRIST and say, ‘Wherefore, I beseech you, be ye followers of me?’ Or can we recollect the Psalmist’s insight into the extent and spirituality of the law of GOD, and his continual conflict with the indwelling sin; awakening in him the spirit of wrestling prayer, and confidence in the GOD of his salvation, and not be again forcibly reminded of him, who has left upon the record the corresponding history of his own experience? ‘We know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin; I was alive without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; O wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank GOD, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD.’ In short, let his instancy in prayer and praise be remembered; his determined and persevering cultivation of heart-religion and practical holiness; his hungering and thirsting after righteousness; his jealous fear and watchful tenderness against sin, and regard for the honor of GOD; his

yearning compassion over his fellow-sinners; his spiritual taste; his accurate discernment; the 'simplicity' of his dependence, and the godly 'simplicity' of his obedience; his peace of mind and stability of profession; his sanctified improvement of the cross; his victory over the world; his acknowledgement of the LORD'S mercy; his trials of faith and patience; his heavenly liberty in the ways of GOD; his habitual living in his presence, and under the quickening, restraining, directing, and supporting influence of HIS word let these holy exercises be considered, either separately or as forming one admirable concentration of Christian excellence; and what do we desire more to complete the portrait of a finished servant of GOD upon the divine model? Is not this a visible demonstration of the power of the word, in 'perfecting the man of GOD, and furnishing him thoroughly unto all good works?' " [Preface to Bridges' Exposition of one hundred and nineteenth Psalm].

## SERMON LXI.

### DAVID A TYPE OF CHRIST.

[TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their GOD, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it.—EZEKIEL xxxiv. 23-24.

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THOSE who skim over the surface of the Scriptures, without devoting much thought to the subject, have little idea how much they lose. We are speaking, now, simply of mental gratification and improvement. It would be almost superfluous to add, that they are also thus robbing the soul. The text has suggested the subjects of types. In its literal sense, a type "denotes a rough draft, or less accurate model, from which a more perfect image is made; but in the sacred, or theological sense of the term, it is a symbol of something future and distant, or an example prepared and evidently designed by GOD to prefigure that future thing." [Horne's Introduction, vol. i, p. 385].

Several of the most prominent characters in the Old Testament history were types of CHRIST. In this way

the Jews were taught what sort of a person the MESSIAH should be, and a constant expectation of HIS coming was kept alive. The types are of essential service to Christians, because they testify of CHRIST as of one promised from the beginning; and they help, in various particulars, to illustrate HIS character and offices.

It is often said, that David was a type of CHRIST. There can be no doubt of the fact; yet very many are ignorant how, or why, the expression is used.

An unfolding of the text will enable us to understand this point. "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their GOD, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it."

No one can deny that it is the MESSIAH who is here called "David." The Psalmist and king of Israel had been dead more than four hundred years when Ezekiel uttered this prediction. Besides, no person had appeared after David, to whom the appellation was given.

He was certainly and signally a type of CHRIST, both in respect of many things belonging to his person, and many passages relating to his life. The Prophets often speak of the MESSIAH by the name of David. Thus Jeremiah says: "They shall serve the LORD their GOD, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them." [xxx: 9]. Hosea uses similar language: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their GOD, and David their

king; and shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days." [iii: 5].

It will help you to discover how David was a type of CHRIST, by noticing some of the corresponding passages in their history. Was our SAVIOUR born, according to the predictions of the Prophets, [Micah v: 2; Matthew ii: 5-6], in Bethlehem of Judea? This was the place of David's nativity. Was David taken from a low estate of life and anointed to be king of Israel? The humbleness of his parentage was only equaled by that of our LORD; and concerning the MESSIAH'S exaltation to regal power, the Psalmist himself has said, speaking in the person of the ALMIGHTY FATHER, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." [Psalm ii: 6]. "Thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." [Psalm xlv: 7].

David was an inspired Prophet, and many things which are mentioned in close connection with events in his own life, had a direct and special reference to his great anti-type, the MESSIAH. Thus, it is said in the twenty-second Psalm, [18th v.], "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." And again, in the sixty-ninth Psalm, "They gave me gall (for my meat to eat), and when I was thirsty, (in my thirst), they gave me vinegar to drink." [21st v].

This language was applicable, in a figurative sense, to the trials and sufferings of David; it was exactly fulfilled in the mockery and crucifixion of CHRIST. The resemblance which the MESSIAH bears to David will be made still more evident, by noticing the offices ascribed to HIM in the text.

1. The MESSIAH was to be a shepherd; David had been a shepherd also. When the savage "lion," and the prowling "bear" came to attack the flock, young as he was, he periled his life to protect his helpless charge. [1st Samuel xvii: 34-35]. Even when called to sit upon the throne of Israel, he seemed to hold a pastoral crook instead of a regal sceptre. In a figurative sense, he was a shepherd still. Hence it is said in the Psalms, [lxxviii: 70-71], that God "chose David His servant, and took him away from the sheepfolds: \* \* \* that he might feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance."

But the MESSIAH, of whom David was a type, is most justly styled "the great SHEPHERD of the sheep." [Heb. xiii: 20]. No words could describe with greater accuracy the life which our SAVIOUR led, than the language which the Prophet had put into his mouth, so long before: "Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. \* \* \* and I will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. \* \* \* I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be." [Ezek. xxxiv: 11-14]. When our SAVIOUR began HIS public ministry, HE announced HIMSELF as "the good SHEPHERD." [St. John x: 11]. In HIS care for the sick and sorrowing, were not these prophecies fulfilled? "HE shall seek the lost; HE shall bring back that which has been driven away; HE shall bind up the broken-hearted." In HIS tenderness and affection for helpless infancy, do we not see a reflection of that moving



picture, which Isaiah drew? "HE shall feed HIS flock like a shepherd; HE shall gather the lambs with HIS arm, and carry them in HIS bosom." [xl : 11].

David exposed himself to the most imminent danger, to save his sheep from harm. Of the MESSIAH, it is said, that HE "laid down HIS life for the sheep." [St. John x : 15].

2. Again, it was foretold in the text, that the MESSIAH, like David, should be a prince. Even after the Prophet of GOD had anointed the son of Jesse to be king, it seemed a doubtful point whether the dignity ever would be reached. Indeed, the chances of success were so over-balanced by opposing ills, that one of little faith would certainly have despaired. The giant Philistine raised his hand to strike the stripling down. Ill-tempered Saul requites his kindness by plans for speedy death. His own son heads a rebellion against him. His bosom friend turns traitor. A helpless fugitive, and shedding bitter tears, he crossed the brook of Kedron, which our LORD afterwards passed over on HIS way to crucifixion. But GOD'S promise failed not. Dangers and troubles only helped along HIS purposes of mercy. David was at last restored to the throne, and blessed with peace.

Looking back upon the rough and rugged road which he had been forced to tread, he could say, in reference to GOD'S providence and grace, "THOU hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; THOU hast made me the head of the heathen." [Psalms xviii : 43].

Were not these particulars in David's life most

wonderfully gone over with afresh by our blessed LORD?

The infant SAVIOUR had hardly made his appearance in the world, before the cruel Herod sought to slay HIM. HE was carried for safety to a foreign land. [St. Matthew ii: 14-15]. His words were mild, and HIS actions free from fault; but spies were hired to watch, and hellish plots were laid. Miraculous power was more than once put forth, to enable HIM to escape. [St. Luke iv: 29-30, &c]. When HIS errand of mercy was done, such precautions were no longer used. One of HIS own disciples sold HIM to HIS enemies. The traitor Judas, like David's faithless friend, tormented with remorse, went and hanged himself. [Ps. lxxix: 25; and cix: 8; Acts i: 20].

But what were the Psalmist's troubles, compared with those of HIM, who was despised and rejected of men; "Who bore our grief, and carried our sorrows;" who "was wounded for our transgression, and bruised for our iniquities;" who was "cut off from the land of the living?"

And yet, as David's anti-type, the MESSIAH was to be "a PRINCE!" The promise had gone forth, "I shall give THEE the heathen for THINE inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for THY possession." [Ps. ii: 8]. "The LORD GOD shall give unto HIM the throne of HIS father David. HE shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of HIS kingdom there shall be no end." [St. Luke i: 32-33].

All this appeared most unlikely. But death was vanquished. The grave was robbed of its prey.

JESUS was triumphant; and now the prediction is made good, "HIM hath GOD exalted with HIS right hand, to be a PRINCE and a SAVIOUR." [Acts v: 31].

Have we no interest in these offices which the MESSIAH was commissioned to discharge?

3. If we are indeed "HIS people," and "the sheep of HIS pasture," to us is the promise given, "I, the LORD, will be their GOD."

No words can convey an adequate idea of what is here implied. GOD is the author and giver of every good and perfect gift. HIS faithful servants are abundantly supplied from this exhaustless source. HIS protecting care succors and defends them day by day. Troubles and distractions may arise, but the GOD of comfort and consolation will be always near. None but those who have devoted themselves to HIS service, with a determination by the help of Divine grace, to walk in the ways of HIS laws, and do the works of HIS commandments, can at all "comprehend \* \* \* what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and know the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge." [Ephesians iv: 18-19].

The government of the "PRINCE of peace" is the only one which time shall not destroy: the flock which has chosen HIM for their SHEPHERD, the only one which shall not soon be scattered. How important, then, to know whether or not CHRIST sustains these relations to us. Is HE our SHEPHERD? If so, we have been gathered into the one true fold, HIS Church. Is HE our PRINCE? If so, we have enlisted under HIS standard. We have been signed with the cross

in baptism, in token of our allegiance. We are bravely fighting in HIS cause. Blessed are they who obey this SHEPHERD's voice. They "shall go in and out, and find pasture." [St. John x: 9]. HE will make "an everlasting covenant with them, even the sure mercies of David." [Isaiah lv: 3]. Blessed are they who follow the steps of this all-powerful PRINCE. No defeat need be dreaded while HE leads. They shall come off more than conquerors, through HIM who hath loved them.

When men make promises to one another, there are many chances that they will not be kept. They may never have meant to do so. Even if their intentions are good, circumstances may render them quite unable to do as they could wish. How many leaders, who have gained their ends by the devotion and efforts of their followers, have disappointed them at last, in the rewards they hoped to gain! But in the midst of things so unstable; so little to be trusted; there is ONE whose promises certainly will be kept. The blessings offered in my text rest upon such a foundation. They may seem "great and precious" beyond what "we desire or deserve," but who can doubt that faithful Christians will realize them all, when the warrant for this confidence is so sure, "I, the LORD, have spoken it!" "With HIM there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Hundreds of years passed by before Ezekiel's words were fully accomplished; but in due time, David's anti-type, the true MESSIAH, appeared as the SHEPHERD of HIS people, and began HIS reign as a PRINCE.

Faith is no longer tried and tested by being obliged to wait. All the consolation which we need in our sorrows, all the strength which our conflicts require, may be found in HIM who has compassion and sympathy for our sufferings, and abundant power to save.

I am pointing you to no delusive hope, my brethren, when I bid you find comfort in the text. The promise is meant for you, for me, for all who will seek, and strive, and persevere. "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the LORD will be their GOD, and my servant David a prince among them; I the LORD have spoken it." [Ezekiel xxxiv: 23-24].

## SERMON LXII.

### STRIVING AFTER PERFECTION.

[TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.]

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Be ye therefore perfect, even as your FATHER which is in Heaven is perfect.—MATTHEW v. 48.

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Is this, then, the condition upon which any human being may alone hope to obtain eternal life? Then farewell hope for every son and daughter of Adam, since in the eyes of an holy GOD can no man living be justified.

This emphatic and extreme sense of the passage cannot possibly be its true sense, since JESUS CHRIST came into the world expressly to save sinners; and in HIS last dying words, assured the thief upon the cross, "this day shalt thou be with ME in paradise!"

In holding up a standard of duty, however, I think it evident that a perfect being cannot possibly do otherwise than hold up a perfect standard. In that case, our aim must be higher, and however far we may fall short of it, HE is not to blame. But it may well be doubted, whether sinless and angelic perfection is the true meaning of the text. It must be

Christian perfection; such perfection as it is possible, by the grace and help of GOD, for fallen, imperfect creatures to arrive at. There are attributes of the Divine character, essential to its perfection, which can belong to none but HIM. HIS power and wisdom must be infinite in order to be perfect, and cannot belong to any created being; no, not to the highest Archangel in heaven!

1. What, then, is the just and true idea of a perfect Christian? Is it attainable? And may the most feeble and unworthy, without presumption, aim at it? To do otherwise, would be to act in the most inconsistent manner. Why should we profess to be Christians at all, unless our minds are fully made up to be decided and whole-hearted Christians? Can any thing be more base, than for a baptized or confirmed person to sit down to calculate nicely, how very few of the pomps and vanities of the world he may renounce, and how few of the least self-denying duties of a Christian he may perform, in order not utterly to forfeit all hope of eternal life? We are persuaded better things of you, dear brethren, though we thus speak.

Something more must be required than sound morals and a spotless life, for these society expects of every polished gentlemen, and refined lady. A cheerful temper, and sweet disposition, when inherited, or the fruit of faithful, early culture, are very charming; but alone, they are not sure signs of a new heart. Nor are sympathy, generosity, or even munificence, apart from the motives by which they have been prompted. Sanctified tempers, a new life framed expressly to

please GOD, and to manifest our love and gratitude to our DIVINE REDEEMER, and pervaded all through with a spirit of prayer and praise, and an humble walk with GOD; these are the best evidences that we are true Christians; and in proportion as they increase in us and abound, that we are growing Christians.

We have in Holy Scripture striking examples of this exalted piety. In Abraham, it was the strength of his faith, hoping against hope; in Moses, meekness under the provocations of a stiff-necked people; in David, the deepest repentance for grievous offences, breathing forth the sad strains of the fifty-first Psalm. In the times of a better dispensation, we have the impetuous zeal of the devoted Peter; the self-sacrificing labors of the heroic Paul; and the more amiable and attractive graces of the beloved John. Two characters alone shine forth without a recorded blemish. Joseph conspicuous in the highest station for his homely domestic virtues; and Daniel for his courageous adherence to the worship of his GOD. Could you combine all these excellencies in one, you would have the pattern of a perfect Christian.

But it will be natural for you to ask, have any such examples graced modern times? Bishop Burnet, a distinguished prelate of the Church of England, at a period when religion was, in general, at a very low ebb, in summing up the character of that eminent saint of GOD, Archbishop Leighton, remarks, "He had the greatest elevation of soul, the largest compass of knowledge, and the most mortified, and most heavenly disposition that I ever saw in mortal; that he had



the greatest parts as well as virtues, with the most perfect humility that I ever saw in man;" "and of whom I may say with great truth, that in free and frequent conversation with him, for above two and twenty years, I never knew him say an idle word, that had not a direct tendency to edification; and I never once saw him in any other temper but that which I wished to be in, in the last moments of my life."

Whilst I was in England a few years ago, in a few interviews which I was permitted to enjoy with the late Archbishop Sumner, I was deeply impressed by the humility and gentleness of his spirit and deportment; and from all that I heard of him from others, I was anxious to know more of his true character in private life. Having the opportunity, I made these inquiries of a distinguished clergyman, nearly of the same venerable age with the Archbishop. "I have known him," was his reply, "from my youth up; we were at school and at the University together; for many years we were fellow-workers in the same ministry, and up to this day he has honored me with his personal friendship; and if I were called upon to point out any fault in him; *fault*, the term is far too strong; if called upon to point out any imperfection, I am sure I should not know where to begin."

So abundant and precious are the fruits of the SPIRIT, at times, even in our own day.

2. By what motives are we addressed to persuade us to seek for these higher attainments in the divine life? By the strongest which can appeal to a noble,

or even to a selfish nature. I am in pursuit of my own happiness: can any happiness compare with a serene and quiet mind, at peace with God? Can any wretchedness be more extreme than that of half-way Christians, restrained by conscience from running to the extreme of fashionable folly; and alas! with so little true relish for better things, that even their highest and most sacred religious duties are a task and a burden? For this, the only remedy is a soul full of love and gratitude, attuned to prayer and praise. A sense of the presence, the approbation and the favor of God, are the very sunlight of the soul.

But this nearness to God is not merely the source of the highest and purest happiness, but is the means of the largest measure of usefulness. With what face can we enforce duties upon others, in the performance of which we are ourselves altogether remiss? With what conscious shame must we be held back from reproving serious faults, when conscious of glaring imperfections of our own? The retort, "Physician heal thyself," can be wholly avoided only by abounding in all Christian graces and virtues.

Better still, the lips need not speak where the life preaches. A holy life is a continual reproof of evil. A blameless, lovely character diffuses an atmosphere around, which attracts to it all who are good and lovely, and either administers a mild and winning admonition to what is evil, or altogether abashes and repels it. The humblest and most blameless Christian is the best of preachers.

3. I have no doubt there are some here who admit

the reasonableness of such a lofty and noble aim; and groaning under a bitter sense of imperfection; and almost total failure, yet most earnestly desire to be better Christians and to reach to higher attainments in the divine life, and would be glad of some wise and practical suggestions to that end. It is plain, that most, if not all the remarkable examples brought forward were exceptional cases. These were Saints chosen for a special work, and sanctified and prepared for it, in a remarkable manner; as instances of what the wonderful grace of GOD is able to accomplish, rather than as patterns for ordinary Christians in common life, to imitate or to be expected to equal. Still, we are all encouraged "to covet most earnestly the most excellent gifts." And who can tell but what some of us might be chosen as vessels of honor, fitted for some special good work of our blessed MASTER, were we willing to surrender ourselves, soul and body, more entirely to his service?

The services of the sanctuary, and the devout exercises of the closet, and all the other means of grace, are of course necessary to growth in grace, and extraordinary diligence in the use of them, if we would hope to grow rapidly and greatly in it. Special seasons of devotion will be precious to us, and even if strict and long continued, like the season of Lent, will never seem long or wearisome. To live near to GOD, and to be transformed more entirely into the image of CHRIST, we must hold high and intimate communion with the FATHER, through our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by the HOLY GHOST given unto us. "This kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting."

In the experience of the best Christians in our times, this transformation is rarely wrought by any sudden or violent process. It is by the entering in of sorrow and sympathy to soften the heart; by privation, or reproach, or hardship to humble pride: by the blighting of our prospects, our hopes or our affections, and thus weaning us from the world; by being made to realize "that as we came naked and alone into the world, so, naked and alone must we depart out of it;" and that when heart and strength shall fail us, God alone can be our defence; indeed, HE only can be the all-sufficient, all-satisfying portion of our souls forever. The being like God, and being swallowed up in HIS love, is the very purpose for which we were created.

"And now, may the GOD of peace who brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, that great SHEPHERD of HIS sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do HIS will, working in you that which is well pleasing in HIS sight, through JESUS CHRIST, to whom be glory forever and ever." AMEN.\*

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\*This Sermon was kindly contributed by Bishop Smith.

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